

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS BY LIBERAL SENATORS

1.1 The Coalition has grave concerns about the issues highlighted by the lack of availability of the regulations attached to the Migration Legislation Amendment (Worker Protection) Bill 2008. Whilst the Coalition is conscious of the various instances of exploitation of workers, it is important that legislation defining obligations be upfront and specific.

1.2 It is very important that the reputation of Australia and Australian sponsors of temporary labour be maintained and this good reputation not be eroded.

1.3 In this respect, the Coalition believes that a framework for sponsor obligations is necessary. Indeed, it was a process that the Coalition commenced through the Migration Amendment (Sponsorship Obligations) Bill 2007. Then Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, the Hon Kevin Andrews MP, allocated additional resources to ensure implementation of more streamlined processes in this area.

1.4 We share the concerns that have been highlighted by the majority of the submissions to this Inquiry. In particular, the imposition of obligations on sponsors which are yet unknown and which are contained in regulations which the government has not yet introduced and the potential for ongoing changes of obligations by regulation in the future are of great concern. Indeed, a number of witnesses actually advocated that the Bill be deferred until the regulations are presented and considered so that passage of the Bill and regulations could be effected together.

1.5 The Coalition is very disappointed that the Deegan Report is not yet available. The Government has made much of the consultation process, although the adequacy of this consultation process was questioned by a number of witnesses in this Inquiry.

1.6 The Coalition takes at face value the Government's indications about sponsor obligations. However, the Coalition places on record its concerns about the enactment of legislation which imposes obligations which are not available for scrutiny at this point but are to be contained in regulations which will be available at some stage in the future.

1.7 The Coalition, notwithstanding its concerns, does not want to delay the protection of workers and therefore will support the passage of the Bill.

Senator Guy Barnett
Deputy Chair

Senator Fierravanti-Wells

Senator Mary Jo Fisher

Senator Trood