

The Recognised Seasonal Employer policy: seeking the elusive triple wins for development through international migration

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The Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) policy is the latest development in a long line of initiatives that successive New Zealand governments have taken to meet short-term demand for workers who do not qualify for entry under selection policies favouring migrants with high-level skills and qualifications. The RSE policy is the outcome of a multi-ministry approach to the problem of seasonal labour shortages in New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture industries. It is a novel initiative for New Zealand in that it is the first significant attempt to develop an international migration policy that explicitly attempts to achieve the triple win for migrants, their countries of origin and the destination countries, and has come to dominate the discourse about international migration and development in the twenty-first century. This paper reviews the origins of the policy, some of its distinctive characteristics and its early implementation.

On 16 October 2006, the New Zealand cabinet agreed that a temporary seasonal work policy should be implemented,

beginning with workers from the South Pacific (Vanuatu, Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Tuvalu and Kiribati), and that the policy should include a mechanism to ensure that local labour options were explored before immigration options were considered (Government of New Zealand 2006b). Underlying this decision were three key considerations. First, there was recognition of a long-standing problem facing employers in the horticulture and viticulture industries in meeting their seasonal labour demands from local sources. Second, it had become clear that current immigration policies used by these employers were not sustainable or sufficient to manage risks for migrants, for local labour supply and for the integrity of New Zealand's policies relating to rights to work and reside in the country. Third, there was acknowledgment that improved temporary work access for Pacific nationals could contribute to New Zealand's broad objectives in the region of encouraging economic development, regional integration and stability, alongside efforts by island states within the Pacific Islands Forum to strengthen their economies.

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The Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) policy is the latest development in a long line of initiatives that successive New Zealand governments have taken to meet short-term demand for workers who do not qualify for entry under selection policies favouring migrants with high-level skills and qualifications. Since the 1970s, New Zealand has had a range of temporary work schemes operating at different times that have targeted recruitment from countries in the Pacific (see Bedford et al. 2007 for an overview of New Zealand and Australian policies in the Pacific). In 2004, in response to real pressure for more access to workers for the horticulture and viticulture industries, the Labour Government introduced temporary policies to allow employers to recruit labour on seasonal work permits. This was seen as a temporary measure while the Department of Labour, in association with the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, developed a more comprehensive policy response to the seasonal labour shortage problem that ensured that unemployed New Zealanders were mobilised as the first option for meeting labour demands.

The RSE policy is the outcome of this multi-ministry approach to the problem of seasonal labour shortages in New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture industries. It is a novel initiative for New Zealand in that it is the first significant attempt to develop an international migration policy that explicitly attempts to achieve the triple win for migrants, their countries of origin and the destination countries, and has come to dominate the discourse about international migration and development in the twenty-first century. The cabinet's decision in October 2006 came very soon after the High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in the UN General Assembly (in September 2006), at which there was widespread acknowledgment of the

potential for policies regulating international migration flows to make major contributions to promoting co-development or 'the coordinated or concerted improvement of economic conditions in both areas of origin and areas of destination based on the complementarities between them' (UN 2006:1).

New Zealand's delegation to the UN dialogue supported initiatives that would facilitate short-term circular migration of workers, in which there were clear benefits for the workers and the sending and receiving countries. Such labour circulation could help meet seasonal labour demands in the destination and provide remittance flows back to the sources of the workers, and it had potential for promoting skills development and knowledge transfer among migrants who returned home. It was acknowledged that while New Zealand was facing shortages of skilled and unskilled labour, there were economic and social risks to origin countries through short-term labour migration, including loss of skills needed in the domestic economy as well as gender issues and the impact of family separation (Banks 2006:2). The development and management of any temporary migration scheme that fostered circulation of workers between New Zealand and their countries of origin, in the context of achieving the triple win, would need extensive consultation and collaboration at several levels. These levels included the governments in the sending and receiving countries in the context of their commitments to policies that contributed to achieving desired national development objectives while at the same time fostering wider international development goals; the industries seeking temporary workers and the agencies responsible for overseeing employment conditions and labour supply at the source and the destination; and the government and non-governmental agencies in sending and receiving countries

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that had particular mandates for ensuring the well-being and development of workers, their families and communities.

This paper reviews the development of the RSE as a policy initiative that has been designed to achieve this triple win. The labour and productivity issues facing the horticulture and viticulture industries in New Zealand are outlined in the next section as a backdrop to the search for a sustainable solution that involves the use of low-skilled labour sourced on a temporary basis from overseas. These industry-specific issues are then linked with the government's parallel concerns for foreign policy initiatives that will contribute to achieving the development goals of members of the Pacific Islands Forum, especially the growing demand for access to employment opportunities in New Zealand. The RSE policy is a deliberate response to industry-specific labour demand and a broader foreign policy objective for contributing to economic development and security in the Pacific region. We outline the specific objectives of the RSE policy and its piloting and implementation in 2007, followed by an overview of the Department of Labour's research and evaluation strategy for monitoring the outcomes of this policy initiative. The research and evaluation strategy has been developed and is being implemented through a mix of collaborations and in-house initiatives, including collaboration with the World Bank in surveys such as those in Tonga and Vanuatu described by Gibson et al. (2008) and McKenzie et al. (2008). The paper concludes with a brief comment on some early findings with regard to the operation of the scheme.

Labour and productivity in the horticulture and viticulture industries

The horticulture and viticulture industries in New Zealand in 2007 were producing export commodities valued at about NZ\$2.3 billion, as well as providing produce worth a further NZ\$2.5 billion for the domestic market. Horticulture and viticulture have undergone major expansion as primary industries in New Zealand in the past three decades, and it is estimated that at least 50,000 workers a year are needed at peak times to meet the highly variable seasonal demands for labour to pick and pack fruit, as well as to prune and prepare the orchards and vineyards for the next season's crops. Employers have been able to draw on a range of sources of temporary labour to meet their seasonal needs for workers, including students, casual workers, people in New Zealand under the Working Holiday Scheme and a pool of unemployed or under-employed people that is a feature of the labour markets of all regions in New Zealand. This diverse mix of potential short-term employees has not been able to meet peak seasonal labour demands in recent years, especially since the early 2000s. A sustained period of economic growth in New Zealand during the first decade of the twenty-first century has resulted in significant shortages of available skilled and unskilled labour, and there have been seasons in which some horticulturalists have been unable to harvest their crops because of a lack of pickers.

Absolute shortage of labour is not, however, the only issue relating to employment in the horticulture and viticulture industries. A critical problem for many years has been high levels of turnover of labour, often within particular growing seasons, resulting in

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few opportunities for training workers and substantial losses through poor-quality work. There is widespread recognition within the horticulture industry, for example, that effective competition in the international market requires higher levels of productivity, efficiency, quality of produce and innovation (Horticulture New Zealand 2006). Achieving these gains will require substantial investments in new plant, new varieties and new production methods in the next five to 10 years. Without confidence in the supply of labour that can contribute to achieving the improved productivity, efficiency and quality goals, the industry is unlikely to make the necessary investment. Recognition of this close link between appropriate labour supply and investment in development of the industry is expressed in the partnership strategy of industry, government and the Council of Trade Unions—the Medium–Long–Term Seasonal Labour Strategy—launched in December 2005.

The horticulture industry estimated that the shortage and poor quality of labour was costing it NZ\$180–300 million in lost output, NZ\$140–230 million in lost value added and NZ\$100–160 million in lost household income. These losses were reducing the ability of industry to invest in productive capacity, including labour productivity, as well as in research and innovation. Low-cost staff remained essential for meeting seasonal labour demands and the seasonal labour strategy emphasised the importance of striking a ‘balance between jobs for New Zealanders on the one hand and facilitating labour opportunities for overseas workers on the other’ (Swain and Maharey 2004:4). This meant maximising the use of local labour, including registered job-seekers and beneficiaries, as well as encouraging employers to consider non-traditional sources of labour such as older workers and people with disabilities. The strategy

recognised that local supply, including non-traditional sources, would not be sufficient to meet demand. A range of options for sourcing overseas workers was identified, including the various special transition-to-residence schemes such as the Samoan Quota and the Pacific Access Category, as well as the Working Holiday Schemes, variations of visa conditions for onshore visitors and direct recruitment offshore.

The development of a strategic, generic approach to seasonal labour shortages was required to meet the magnitude of the demand for labour as well as to contain a trend towards illegal use of casual employees under unacceptable working conditions—a trend that had become much more obvious in the very tight labour market conditions of the mid 2000s. A mixture of short-term and longer-term responses was needed to ensure sustainable industry and regional development. Short-term immigration responses were to be used only when they formed part of longer-term strategies such as skills development and improved productivity. As Swain and Maharey (2004:6) argued in their case for the seasonal labour strategy

The key role for the government is helping get the mix of interventions right. This includes increasing participation, increasing productivity, helping upskill New Zealanders, facilitating overseas labour where appropriate and assessing industry responses. It also has a role to play in supporting industry to work towards structural change over the longer-term, where they ultimately take greater responsibility for their labour needs.

A three-stage strategy was proposed with a high level of government intervention restricted to the first stage. Immigration responses would be used where no

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suitable New Zealanders were available, 'although this would be premised on industry committing to plan for its future labour needs over the medium to longer-term, and using good employer and recruitment practices, including use of legal labour' (Swain and Maharey 2004:6). The second stage would require industry and government to work together more closely on compliance issues, such as planning for future workforce development and good employer and recruitment practices, before overseas workers could be recruited using a 'good employer' model similar to that developed for the Talent Visa (Accredited Employer) system, which enabled approved employers to recruit overseas to meet their talent needs without requiring a standard labour-market assessment (Bedford et al. 2005). Approvals to recruit would require industry-level cooperation to demonstrate the involvement of firms in the industry or region in productivity improvement activities, including workforce skill development in partnership with relevant independent training organisations and tertiary education providers.

The essence of the 2004 seasonal labour strategy, which was subsequently endorsed by the Horticulture and Viticulture Seasonal Working Group in 2005, was outlined to demonstrate that the RSE policy was part of a planned approach to ensuring industry and government agencies positioned themselves in the longer-term to improve labour market conditions, workforce development and industry productivity. An immediate temporary migration policy initiative, introduced in 2005 for the 2005–06 season, was the Seasonal Work Permit pilot that enabled employers to recruit people who were in New Zealand from visa-waiver countries on valid temporary visitor permits to work for periods of up to nine months in areas where there was a declared labour shortage. Feedback from growers

in 2005 and early 2006 indicated that this pilot scheme was working well and it was extended for a further six months in March 2006 (Cunliffe 2006a).

During 2005–06, a longer-term strategic response was being examined in consultation with industry—a response that was to become known as the Recognised Seasonal Employer policy. The essence of this policy was announced by the Prime Minister, Helen Clark, at the Pacific Islands Forum meeting in Fiji in October 2006, and was trialled, with the support of the World Bank, in the 2006–07 harvesting season in Central Otago (Cunliffe 2006b). While the RSE policy was being trialled, the Seasonal Work Permit pilot was extended for a further 12 months to ensure that employers had access to sufficient temporary labour for the 2006–07 season. Under this extension, current permit holders were allowed to renew their permits for up to nine more months, therefore enabling employers to access workers who had already gained some of the skills required for harvesting on orchards and vineyards and working in the packing-houses. New six-month permits were also issued to visitors from visa-waiver and visa-required countries who were already in New Zealand on valid temporary permits (Cunliffe 2006c).

The Pacific connection: a regional perspective on migration and development

In addition to being part of a comprehensive set of initiatives that comprised a medium to long-term seasonal labour strategy for the horticulture and viticulture industries, the RSE policy was also designed, from the outset, to contribute to New Zealand's foreign policy in the Pacific. The debate about shortages of labour in the horticulture and viticulture industries in New Zealand

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and Australia overlapped with another debate relating to labour supply and employment in the Pacific islands. In the report of the Eminent Persons' Group Review for the Pacific Islands Forum, Chan et al. (2004:13) stressed: 'Listen to the needs and aspirations of the burgeoning population of young people in the region, and recognise the impact of bigger and more youthful populations on the resources required for education and vocational training, healthcare, and job opportunities.' Pressure from leaders of Pacific countries on Australia and New Zealand to open up their labour markets to more unskilled/low-skilled migration from the Pacific was mounting, especially to meet the labour demands in the horticulture and viticulture industries. New Zealand's response to these demands reflected its long-standing links with Pacific countries—links that went back to the earliest days of European settlement in the region and, for the indigenous Maori population, for at least 1,000 years before that. Successive New Zealand governments have identified the country and its peoples as being part of the Pacific much more explicitly than has been the case in Australia (Bedford et al. 2007).

The Pacific region engages a substantial proportion of New Zealand's diplomatic, defence and development-assistance resources, has been a source of a significant proportion of the country's immigrants for more than 30 years and is an important market for New Zealand's goods and services. At different times since the mid 1970s, temporary work schemes have been a feature of New Zealand's relations with Samoa, Tonga, Fiji, Kiribati and Tuvalu and, in 2002, all of these countries were included in a new scheme that allowed small numbers of their citizens to be balloted each year for residence in New Zealand under specified conditions. The Pacific Access Category replaced a number of existing arrangements

with these countries (such as the visa-waiver privileges that had been extended to citizens of Kiribati and Tuvalu in 1986, and the temporary work permit schemes they had had since 1992) and continued a long tradition of 'special arrangements' with selected countries in the region.

In 2000, a civilian *coup d'état* in Fiji and widespread civil unrest in Solomon Islands strengthened perceptions in New Zealand and Australia that the potential for serious social and political instability in the larger countries of the Western Pacific was increasing. Awareness of the very different demographic situations prevailing in the island countries of the Western and Eastern Pacific, and the absence of any migration outlets for Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, was becoming more widespread among policy agencies in New Zealand, especially as leaders from these three countries were becoming more vocal at meetings of the Pacific Islands Forum about the widening disparities between growth in their labour forces and growth in opportunities for employment outside the village economy (Bedford 2005).

In 2006, two events furthered this appreciation of an intensifying problem relating to employment in the region among policymakers in New Zealand's Department of Labour. The first was a major study by the World Bank on population change, labour markets and migration in the Pacific (Luthria et al. 2006) and the second, following closely on the release of the World Bank's report, was a conference on the future of Pacific labour markets organised by the Pacific Cooperation Foundation in Wellington (Plimmer 2007). The World Bank report and the Pacific labour markets conference placed considerable emphasis on the challenges posed by population growth in Melanesia as well as parts of Micronesia and Polynesia and on the potential for greater access to temporary

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work in Australia and New Zealand to make positive contributions to development in Pacific countries. Participation by senior New Zealand immigration policy managers in the UN High-Level Dialogue on International Migration and Development in New York in September 2006 also reinforced an appreciation of the positive role migration could play in the development of migrant sending and receiving countries.

At the meeting of the Pacific Islands Forum in Fiji in October 2006, Prime Minister Clark announced that New Zealand was developing a new temporary labour migration policy that would prioritise access for Pacific workers to seasonal employment in New Zealand's horticulture and viticulture industries. This policy would allow for up to 5,000 workers to be employed at any one time. Six countries were initially selected to facilitate the development of the RSE policy: Samoa, Tonga and Tuvalu in Polynesia, Kiribati in Micronesia, and Fiji and Vanuatu in Melanesia. After the military coup in Fiji in December 2006, Fiji was removed from the list as part of the sanctions against the military regime. The five remaining countries, in which the RSE policy would be facilitated during its establishment and trialling, were subsequently termed the 'kick-start' states. It was with reference to these countries that a research program to evaluate the early operation of the RSE policy was to be developed by the Department of Labour with a view to reporting back to the Cabinet Policy Committee on the early results of the policy by 31 October 2009 (Government of New Zealand 2006a). From the outset, collaboration with the World Bank was evident, in the implementation of the pilot scheme involving a group of about 200 ni-Vanuatu workers on vineyards in Central Otago early in 2007, as well as in the development of the research program for evaluating the impact of the scheme on workers and their communities in Vanuatu, Tonga and Samoa.

RSE policy: a unique immigration policy initiative

The RSE is unique in New Zealand's immigration policy initiatives in that from the outset it has involved three core government agencies sharing responsibility for delivering the program: the Ministry of Social Development (which includes Work and Income New Zealand), the Department of Labour (which is responsible for immigration) and NZAID, which manages New Zealand's official overseas aid program. NZAID is responsible for assisting with the negotiation of the appropriate inter-agency understandings with governments in the Pacific that cover arrangements for recruiting workers and ensuring that those selected meet the requirements for a Seasonal Work Visa. NZAID is also monitoring the outcomes of the scheme in the islands in the context of its primary development objective, which was explained by New Zealand's Minister of Foreign Affairs: '[F]irst and foremost it will help alleviate poverty directly by providing jobs for rural and outer island workers who often lack income-generating work' (Peters 2006).

The Ministry of Social Development is charged with registering employers and ensuring that there is a genuine need to recruit overseas labour in the areas where the recruits will work. The onus is on employers to prove that no New Zealanders are available for the required tasks and Work and Income New Zealand checks the employer's claims carefully against their records of potential labour in the region. Obtaining permission to recruit is not automatic—as already noted, there is a clear 'New Zealand first' dimension to the program to ensure that local people are not denied opportunities to pick up available work in orchards and vineyards.

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To achieve accreditation as a recognised seasonal employer, the applicant has to meet several criteria relating to good work practices. These include the ability to pay workers the minimum wage for at least 30 hours a week, provision of accommodation and pastoral care (food, clothing, transport to and from work, access to banking facilities, necessary translation support and opportunities for recreation and religious observance) and meeting the usual health and safety requirements. In addition, employers have to agree to pay half of the return airfare for the workers and to ensure the return tickets are acquired at the time the workers are recruited.

Once an employer is granted RSE status, which is valid for two years, they need to apply for an Agreement to Recruit (ATR) from the Department of Labour. The ATR contains details of the numbers of workers they require, the countries these workers will be sourced from and further details about the terms and conditions offered to workers as well as the employers' responsibilities. Employers are required to submit applications for an ATR every season and to advise the Ministry of Social Development of these labour requirements. If suitable New Zealand labour becomes available in a subsequent season, employers have to incorporate these workers into their labour force before they can recruit offshore again.

When the ATR has been signed off, the employer can initiate a recruitment program. This can involve sending someone to the Pacific country from which the employer wishes to select their recruits or using an agent in New Zealand to recruit on their behalf. In Central Otago, for example, a company called Seasonal Solutions has been set up to obtain the labour required in the local orchards and vineyards, and this company recruits ni-Vanuatu for work in New Zealand. If an employer had an

existing arrangement to recruit low-skilled workers from a particular country that predated the introduction of the RSE, they were able to continue with this arrangement. New Agreements to Recruit, however, prioritise Pacific Islands Forum countries, especially the five 'kick-start' countries in which the Department of Labour is facilitating the RSE program through the development of pre-departure training and the setting up of work-ready pools of labourers.

Workers in the islands, who were selected for employment in New Zealand under an approved ATR, had to apply for a Seasonal Work Visa. To obtain this, they need a valid passport, a temporary entry chest X-ray certificate (screening for tuberculosis), a medical certificate, police clearance and a return air ticket (employers are required to pay the cost of half of the return airfare in advance). Workers are also required to attend a pre-departure orientation workshop before leaving for New Zealand at which topics such as climate, clothing and footwear requirements, taxation, insurance, remitting and budgeting are discussed. The scheme allows for the return of workers in subsequent seasons if an employer wishes to recruit them again; there is no restriction on the number of times a worker can be engaged under the RSE policy.

The four main steps in the RSE policy process are summarised in Figure 1.

The processing of all RSE and ATR applications (steps one and two above) is undertaken at a centralised RSE unit in Wellington. RSE work visa and permit applications are processed at appropriate offshore or onshore offices. The department has also recruited five designated RSE compliance staff: a national manager and four RSE compliance officers. Two RSE compliance officers are based in Hawke's Bay and one each in Christchurch and Nelson. These officers have a dual role in managing relationships with employers

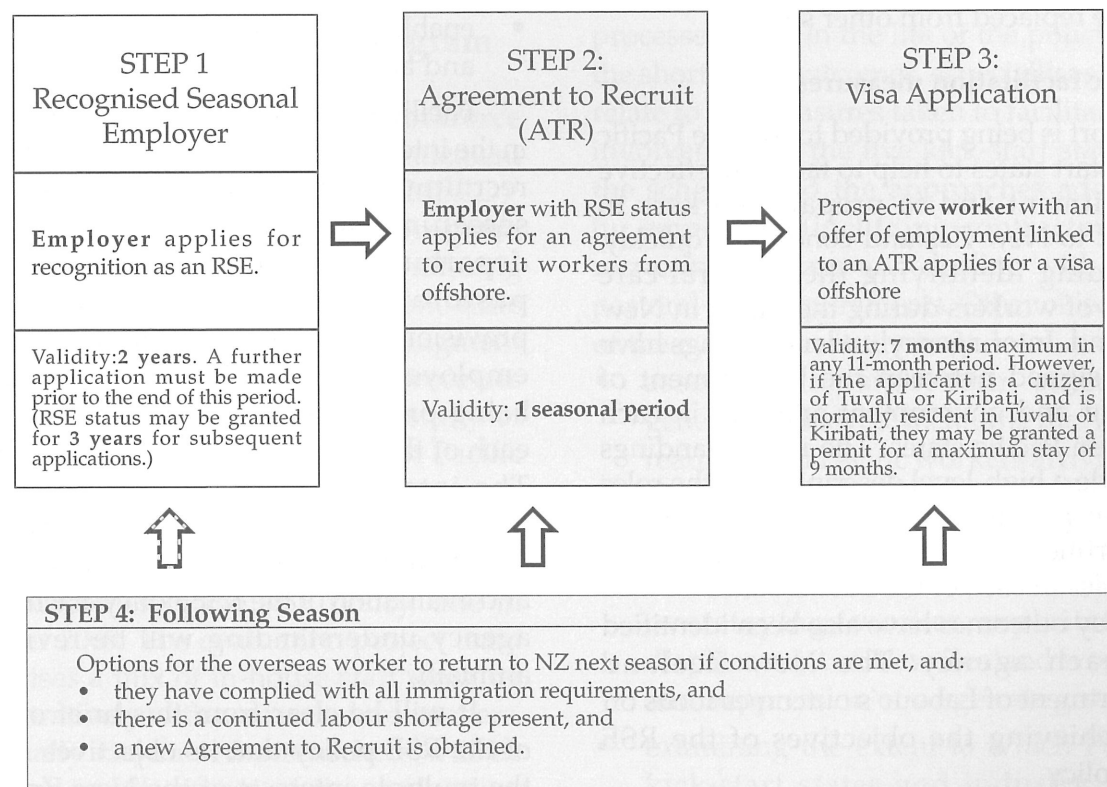
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(including contractors) in their region (RSE and non-RSE) and in monitoring and ensuring compliance with the conditions of the RSE policy. In addition, six RSE labour inspectors have been appointed (Northland, Bay of Plenty, Hawke's Bay, Nelson/Blenheim and Central Otago, and a coordinator based in Wellington). The labour inspectors are responsible for assisting employers (including contractors) to meet employment relations standards, monitoring and reporting on workplace conditions and health and safety issues. Pacific liaison officers are also likely to be recruited to assist with the settlement and pastoral care of workers. The liaison officers will work alongside employers providing information,

advice and support to assist them in meeting the pastoral-care needs of workers with emphasis on support and facilitation. In effect, the officers will perform a liaison role between Pacific workers and employers, acting as a conduit for information exchange and issue resolution.

After the launch of the RSE policy in April 2007, a transitional policy was put in place to provide an opportunity for employers (including contractors) to shift to RSE status over a two-year period. The transitional RSE policy came into effect in November 2007 and is available until 2009. It allows horticulture and viticulture employers (including contractors), committed to working towards attaining RSE status, to

Figure 1 RSE work policy process



Source: AusAID, 2008. Pacific Economic Survey 2008: connecting the region, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra. Available from www.pacificsurvey.org

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recruit people already in New Zealand to undertake seasonal work, if it is confirmed that there are no suitable and available New Zealanders to fill these positions. This is done through Variation of Conditions for visitors to work for up to six weeks in areas of labour shortage and an extra three-month stay for working holidaymakers who work for three months in the seasonal industries. Regional RSE transition facilitators have been funded to assist these employers. Even though the seasonal labour strategy aims to achieve longer periods of employment available for New Zealanders and less need for peak seasonal workers, it is recognised that there will always be short periods of peak labour demand. For this reason, the Variation of Conditions is a continuing policy. The transitional RSE policy, however, will expire in late 2009 after a review of industry labour needs to ensure that transitional RSE workers can be replaced from other sources.

Pacific facilitation measures

Support is being provided to the five Pacific kick-start states to help to facilitate effective recruitment and to prepare workers to adjust to New Zealand conditions quickly, including identifying the pastoral-care needs of workers during their time in New Zealand. Inter-agency understandings have been signed between the Department of Labour and government agencies in each of these Pacific states. The understandings provide a high-level description of the roles and responsibilities of the New Zealand Department of Labour and the respective agencies in each of the Pacific states.

Key outcomes have also been identified for each agency. The New Zealand Department of Labour's outcomes focus on

- achieving the objectives of the RSE policy
- avoiding overstaying, exploitation of workers, displacement of New Zealand's workforce and suppression of wage

growth in the horticulture and viticulture industries

- securing at least 50 per cent of the available RSE places in the first five years from eligible Pacific Islands Forum countries
- contributing to the development objectives in Pacific countries by fostering economic growth and regional integration.

While there are some differences between individual states, the outcomes for Pacific states' public service agencies typically relate to

- maintaining the integrity of the RSE policy
- developing and maintaining a reputation as a reliable source of seasonal labour
- securing a fair portion of seasonal work opportunities for their citizens
- enabling their citizens to generate savings and acquire relevant experience.

Facilitative arrangements are identified in the inter-agency understandings covering recruitment (including preselection and screening of potential workers); pre-departure orientation; visa processing; pastoral care; and compliance. The provision of pastoral care is primarily an employer responsibility, with assistance being provided by representatives from each of the kick-start states as appropriate. The inter-agency understandings also confirm each agency's commitment to participating in the continuing monitoring and evaluation of the RSE policy. Each inter-agency understanding will be reviewed annually.

It will be clear from this brief outline of the RSE policy that its objectives reflect the multiple interests of the New Zealand government, together with the interests of a range of other stakeholders including Pacific states, industry, employers and workers.

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Added to this complexity are the unique organisational arrangements made within and between the New Zealand agencies, especially the Department of Labour, the Ministry of Social Development and NZAID, and the Pacific partners and industry. To meet the accountability and learning needs of various stakeholders, a comprehensive evaluation and research program has been put in place by the Department of Labour. The focus of this work is primarily on describing and assessing the implementation of the RSE policy, its short-term outcomes and risks. Separately, the department is also partnering with external institutions to identify the economic and social impacts of the RSE program in the kick-start states. This research and evaluation strategy is outlined in the next section of this paper.

The Department of Labour's research and evaluation program

The Department of Labour's Workforce team for International Migration, Settlement and Employment Dynamics (IMSED)¹ has an RSE evaluation work program that comprises three strands: monitoring key activities and outcomes; real-time evaluation of feedback loops to augment operational activities to refine RSE processes and activities; and an evaluation study of aspects of RSE policy focusing on Pacific facilitation measures and their outcomes. The findings from these three strands will inform a report to cabinet on the short-term outcomes of the RSE policy, due in October 2009. The evaluation project team comprises a mix of in-house staff working collaboratively with contracted researchers. Externally contracted researchers will be involved in all aspects of the evaluation, taking primary responsibility for the field-work components and contributing to data analysis and report writing.

An Evaluation Advisory Group is supporting the work of the project team. In broad terms, this group is responsible for advising on cultural and contextual issues in relation to the evaluation, advising on the design and development of research tools and methods and reviewing the reports prepared by the project team. Membership of this group is drawn from the key stakeholders including the Department of Labour, the Ministry of Social Development, NZAID, the Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, the Pacific kick-start states, representatives of the horticulture and viticulture industries, the New Zealand Council of Trade Unions and university-based technical advisers. The time frame for the evaluation is short relative to the time required for medium to long-term policy results to become apparent. In the light of this, the evaluation focuses on activities and processes early in the life of the policy and the short-term outcomes, especially as these relate to the measures taken to facilitate the involvement of the five kick-start states in the scheme, and the approaches adopted by employers (including contractors) to recruiting workers and dealing with their pastoral-care requirements. Other objectives of the evaluation study include

- assessing the short-term outcomes generally achieved, including the 'work-readiness' of Pacific workers arriving in New Zealand
- examining the management of potential risks to New Zealand including overstaying, worker exploitation, displacement of New Zealand workers and suppression of wage-rate growth
- examining the extent to which Pacific kick-start states and industry have begun to establish self-sustaining relationships, and any lessons learnt in establishing these.

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Positive development outcomes for industry and the Pacific states, while critical long-term objectives of the RSE policy, are not the core focus of the initial evaluation study, given the short timeframe for reporting to cabinet. The Department of Labour is, however, collaborating with the World Bank and the University of Waikato in a major survey research program in Tonga, Vanuatu and Samoa that will provide extensive information on economic and social outcomes for the migrants and their communities (see Gibson et al. 2008 and McKenzie et al. 2008 for further details of these surveys). Key components of the Department of Labour's evaluation study include: surveys of horticulture and viticulture employers and contractors; interviews with New Zealand and kick-start Pacific RSE workers;² key informant interviews with representatives from industry, participating Pacific regional agencies and kick-start states, government agencies and communities in New Zealand; administrative data analysis, especially the RSE, ATR and visa-processing data; and document review.

Early developments and reactions

Late in 2007, the first batches of workers recruited from Tonga and Vanuatu under the RSE policy announced in April began to arrive in New Zealand and, by February 2008, workers from all five of the kick-start states were in employment in New Zealand. By 14 June 2008, 5,079 RSE workers were in New Zealand, employed in 12 regions (Table 1). These workers represented 73 per cent of a total of 6,969 people who had been approved to that date on ATRs. The majority (91 per cent) were working in three regions: Hawke's Bay (1,874 workers) and Bay of Plenty (1,802 workers) in the North Island, and Nelson/Marlborough (952 workers)

in the South Island. Seventy-five clients had been granted ATRs and the average number of workers per ATR was 33 (Table 1). There was, however, a wide range in the numbers of workers per ATR, from 414 for a single client in the Bay of Plenty to 24 clients seeking five or fewer workers. On average, the ATRs for clients in the Bay of Plenty (the major kiwi-fruit growing region) were for larger numbers of overseas workers (50 per ATR on average) than those submitted by clients in the fruit and grape-growing regions of Hawke's Bay and Nelson/Marlborough (28 and 29 workers per ATR on average) (Table 1). In just more than 12 months, the RSE had filled its quota of workers and there was a general sense in the industry and in the government agencies responsible that the policy was working reasonably well (Courtney 2008).

Nic Maclellan (2008:2), an Australian journalist with a strong interest in temporary employment schemes, cautioned in a recent assessment of the RSE policy that 'there are a number of areas where a lack of engagement with unions, the community sector and Pacific diaspora communities has led to significant problems'. At the other end in Vanuatu, John Hammond and John Connell (2008:14), reporting on field-work on Tanna, noted that 'there have at least been clear income gains, though it is not yet possible to indicate what these have been used for, but they appear to be focused on a development agenda'. Gibson et al. (2008) and McKenzie et al. (2008), also reporting on preliminary findings from substantive research in Tonga and Vanuatu that is being conducted by the World Bank and the University of Waikato on development outcomes in the islands, are also cautiously optimistic, especially with regard to the scheme reaching those in rural areas who could clearly benefit from greater access to waged employment opportunities overseas. Hammond and Connell (2008:15) concluded: '[F]or the moment [the RSE]

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Table 1 Regional distribution of recruits under the RSE policy (excluding unapproved 'on-hand' applications)

Region	Total approved on ATR	Total recruits (to 14/6/08)	Percentage approved recruited	No. clients (approved ATR)	No. ATR approved	Average per ATR (approved ATR)	Average per client (approved ATR)
North Island							
Northland	152	96	63.2	5	9	17	30
Auckland	80	26	32.5	1	3	27	80
Waikato	109	41	37.6	2	5	22	55
Bay of Plenty	2,479	1,802	72.7	13	50	50	191
Gisborne	15	0	0.0	1	1	15	15
Hawke's Bay	2,206	1,874	85.0	19	80	28	116
Manawatu	23	23	100.0	1	1	23	23
Wairarapa	20	10	50.0	1	1	20	20
Subtotal North Island	5,084	3,872	76.2	43	150	34	118
South Island							
Nelson	537	358	66.7	16	31	17	34
Marlborough	1,090	594	54.5	13	25	44	84
Canterbury	20	20	100.0	1	1	20	20
Otago	238	235	98.7	2	2	119	119
Subtotal South Island	1,885	1,207	64.0	32	59	32	59
Total	6,969	5,079	72.9	75	209	33	93
Three main regions							
Nelson/Marlborough	1,627	952	58.5	29	56	29	56
Bay of Plenty	2,479	1,802	72.7	13	50	50	191
Hawke's Bay	2,206	1,874	85.0	19	80	28	116
Subtotal 3 regions	6,312	4,628	73.3	61	186	34	103
% Bay of Plenty	35.6	35.5		17.3	23.9		
% Hawke's Bay	31.7	36.9		25.3	38.3		
% Nelson/	23.3	18.7		38.7	26.8		
Marlborough	90.6	91.1		81.3	89.0		

Source: Unpublished ATR returns, New Zealand Department of Labour.

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appears to be a success and perhaps a model both for Australia to introduce a scheme and for the scheme to be expanded.'

It is very early days to be drawing conclusions about the success or failure of New Zealand's most ambitious temporary work program in the Pacific. The RSE policy has been developed over two years, drawing on experience with earlier policies designed to attract temporary workers from Pacific countries. There has been considerable consultation between representatives of government agencies in New Zealand and the Pacific and with different industry groups. There has also been consultation with Pacific communities in New Zealand, although representatives of these groups are currently among the most critical of the policy and the way it has been implemented (see, for example, Maclellan 2008). The research and evaluation program that has been proposed by the Department of Labour and its stakeholder groups is ambitious, as is the timetable for reporting back to cabinet in October 2009. As observed earlier, it is envisaged that an evaluation focus on optimising the implementation of the policy will provide a positive environment in which industry and Pacific states can realise their economic and development outcomes in the medium to long term.

The Department of Labour is under no illusions about the challenges it faces in ensuring the RSE policy achieves the triple win for development that is the ultimate goal of the current generation of temporary work programs. There are some significant areas of potential conflict between various parties, but the initial signs seem positive and the collaboration between industry, the various New Zealand government agencies and the Pacific states remains strong. The various stakeholders, together with the World Bank, which is supporting continuing research into the achievement of desired development outcomes in the

participating Pacific countries, remain cautiously optimistic as the RSE policy enters its second year of operation.

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Notes

- ¹ The IMSED team is part of the workforce policy group and undertakes research and evaluation in the area of international migration, settlement and employment dynamics.
- ² A talanoa approach is being used in the interviews with Pacific workers. Talanoa is a form of conversation enabling an exchange of ideas in ways that recognise the different positions of those in the conversation. Vaoleti (2006) has provided a very useful overview of this research method.