

The Australian Workers' Union

- Australia's oldest continuing trade union formed in 1886
- 130,000 members, Australia's largest blue collar union
- Affiliated to the Australian Council of Trade Unions, Australian Labor Party, IUF, ITF, IMF
- Largest rural and regional union with more than fifty per cent of our membership working outside of the metropolitan areas

Why does the AWU support a Pacific Islands Pilot Migration Scheme

- A clear and genuine labour shortage in some of Australia's agricultural industries with a projected shortfall of up to 100,000 workers
- Australia is a wealthy nation being strangled by its own success, while our Pacific island neighbours are simply trying to keep their heads above water
- Labour mobility is an emerging challenge, Australian unions need to take note of the experiences of Europe and North America to ensure that a system of labour mobility in Australia is regulated to wipe out exploitation and to protect Australian employment standards

What are the AWU's concerns about labour mobility

- The previous Australian Government's 457 visa program was rorted and therefore flawed in its implementation
- The shame file involving exploited Filipino and Chinese workers was huge leading to serious community opposition to the scheme
- However the new Labor Government has commenced a review of the 457 skilled visa program – with the aim of fixing the system
- Seeing the pitfalls of some schemes in Canada and New Zealand causes some concern

What do we think should be in the pilot for a Pacific Islands Migration Scheme

- A number of key issues need to be covered to ensure our support for a scheme:
 - That the workers are not paid a cent less than the market rate (inclusive of superannuation, loadings etc)
 - That the workers are deployed only in areas where there is an agreed shortage and not as replacement workers for an existing workforce – or replacement for investment in extra local skills training
 - That no child labour or forced labour be involved in the program
 - That guest workers are guaranteed freedom from violence and harassment, inhumane treatment and arbitrary deportation

What do we think should be in the pilot for a Pacific Islands Migration Scheme cont...

- No forced or inappropriate deduction from wages
- Australian standards of accommodation and sanitation
- That these workers be given the same right to join a union, and participate in collective bargaining, as their Australian colleagues (the AWU would want guarantees that we are given access to communicate with these workers both in their home countries and once they arrive in Australia)
- That employers are not allowed to withhold passports or permits – seasonal labourers should be able to look for alternative work in the horticultural industry if issues rise with an employer after arrival in Australia

What do we think should be in the pilot for a Pacific Islands Migration Scheme cont...

- That a transparent public registrar be available outlining the scale of the deployment
- An employer accreditation scheme either direct or through an agency
- Provision of vocational education and training for the workers
- A guaranteed labour inspectorate involving both Government and union officials – especially on health and safety grounds