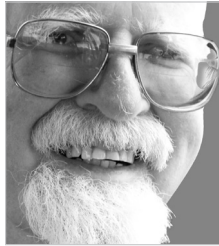


Talking business with Anthony Haas

More Solomon Islands dollars please !!!!

What sort of dollars do Solomon Islanders working on RSE in NZ earn? Up to \$5,000.00 NZ



To get their Solomon Islands (SI) dollars, there were twenty-seven men and women from the Solomon Islands who picked and packed apples in the Wairarapa. Be aware when you buy and eat a local apple, you may be helping to enlarge the pay packet for these seasonal workers. Around fifty SI workers have come across to NZ each year as seasonal workers. Some come to the Wairarapa, many others work in different regions and though most are in the apple industry there are other areas of employment.

How is the money spent?

Each year the NZ government and local employers work together within a scheme to bring young people to NZ from Pacific island countries. Benefits for NZ employers are, they get keen hardworking people to complete horticultural harvests. It benefits the Pacific Islanders who return home with money. They use their savings for building or renovating a house, to pay school fees, to start a small shop and to help their extended families. A third beneficiary is the Solomon Islands nation as the savings of the workers are spent within their own country.

What is really happening?

Lois Aburi Kusilifu, herself an indigenous Solomon Islander, recently completed a thesis toward her University of Otago degree looking at the experiences of Solomon Islanders who come to work as part of the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme (RES). This is the first in-depth study of Solomon Islander seasonal migrant workers. Several years ago the number of seasonal workers in NZ exceeded 5,000. They arrived under the RSE scheme from Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Vanuatu,

Kiribati and other Pacific island countries.

Leaving your village to seek a better life has been part of SI culture for thousands of years. The nation is a group of islands and inter-island trading is common. New Zealand developed its RSE



Honiara Port in Solomon Islands

policy based on a Canadian temporary rural work program. By bringing young people to NZ the “youth bulge” of SI is lessened by giving them work. The scheme enables NZ employers to get their horticulture harvests in on time when otherwise they would struggle to find enough unskilled seasonal workers.

The experiences of the 27 Solomon Island workers in the apple industry in the Wairarapa was the theme of the study by Lois Aburi Kusilifu. Some were first time workers in NZ and others were returning workers. Some stayed for three months others worked for up to seven months. All of them made savings. Those who worked in NZ for three months saved from NZ \$500 to NZ \$3000. Those who worked for up to seven months saved up to NZ \$5000. Often the workers sent money home while they were working, but most took it back to the Solomon Islands in a lump sum.

So - you may be thinking...how were these workers chosen and how did they settle into NZ? That is one of the questions that may be considered as we review the RSE scheme on Solomon Islander seasonal workers in New Zealand.

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