

Talking business with Anthony Haas

Pastoral care discussion

In the Wairarapa, there are 51 Pacific Island seasonal workers, of whom eight are women. All workers are employed by JR Orchards in Greytown. Craggy Range in Martinborough also employs Pacific Islanders, they bring in workers from Vanuatu.



Mrs Lois Aburi Kusilifu

From Nov-April they had 10 workers: a couple led the group. In June the couple will return with some men. Solomon Islanders who have been working under the Recognised Seasonal Employment (RSE) scheme are predominately employed in the Hawkes Bay and Bay of Plenty regions. However, there are smaller pockets of workers found in other parts of the country.

During the first few seasons of the RSE scheme, Solomon Islanders were not officially part of the scheme, instead they were privately employed by farmers. However, in 2010, when Solomon Islands officially became part of the RSE scheme, the number of workers increased. To date there are nearer to 500 workers, a small number in comparison to Vanuatu's 2000 workers each season.

The seasonal workers and local hosts face pastoral care challenges says Lois Aburi Kusilifu, Solomon Islander wife of a Wairarapa pastor. In March 2015 she wrote a dissertation for her Otago University Master of Indigenous Studies on the experiences of the Solomon Islands Seasonal Workers under the RSE scheme in New Zealand.

On Wed 20 July from 7.30 pm she will speak at an open meeting in



Masterton to the Wairarapa branch of the NZ Institute of International Affairs, in the Wairarapa Sports House on the corner of Chapel and Jackson St, elaborating on the pastoral issues and expanding on the impact that RSE has had on the horticulture and viticulture industries.

Solomon Islands impact on horticulture and viticulture

Among reasons for implementing the RSE scheme were the shortage of seasonal labour for the horticulture and viticulture industries, and the acknowledgment that improving temporary access to Pacific Islands Forum nations, contributed to New Zealand's broad objectives of encouraging economic development, regional integration and stability.

The Taranaki Daily News said on 2 January 2014 that since the implementation of the employment scheme the RSE has helped orchard owners to raise production by 32%, and that the industry could not have grown without the RSE workers.

Lois Ahuri Kusilifu draws attention to how the scheme has benefited its workers. In a survey carried out in 2014 for Solomon Island workers, the scheme has benefited their immediate and extended families. However, the survey showed that each season, "issues of concern expressed by workers, were accommodation, lack of social interaction, recreational activities and opportunities for many to attend church".

Worker programmes

Although there are other worker programmes in New Zealand for seasonal migrants, such as the Variations of Conditions (VOC), Worker Holiday Scheme (WHS) and Working Holiday Extensions (WHE) the most common programme for the Solomon Islands seasonal migrant is the RSE scheme.

Greytown can use a range of seasonal worker programmes – and could improve pastoral care and other aspects by using strengths within the community.

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