



# *Media Release*

## **Pacific Seasonal Workers Pilot Scheme**

**21 August 2008**

The Australian Government has announced a pilot Pacific Seasonal Workers Scheme targeting one country each from Melanesia, Polynesia and Micronesia.

The three-year pilot will place up to 2,500 Pacific islanders from Vanuatu, Tonga and Kiribati in horticultural work in Australian regional areas with identified labour shortages.

The three countries were identified for the pilot scheme because of their proven track record with sending workers abroad.

The Governments of Australia and PNG will also work together to strengthen PNG's labour sending arrangements to enable the early inclusion of workers from PNG in the pilot.

Visas issued will allow workers to work in Australia for seven months in a year.

Announcing the scheme, the Australian Government said it understands the importance of labour mobility to many economies in the Pacific and the desire of Pacific island states to pursue greater access to the Australian unskilled and semi-skilled labour market.

This was why it was decided to trial a model with a small but representative number of Pacific island countries, which is designed carefully to maximise the chances of success. It is hoped that the pilot program will allow Australia to eventually roll the scheme out for the benefit of the whole region.

The pilot will be reviewed after 18 months to ensure it is meeting the needs of Australian employers and Pacific island workers and that the necessary safeguards are working effectively.

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