



Cabinet Business Committee

Minute of Decision

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Increasing the Cap for the Recognised Seasonal Employer Scheme

Portfolio **Immigration**

On 20 December 2017, the Cabinet Business Committee, having been authorised by Cabinet to have Power to Act [CAB-17-MIN-0565]:

- 1 **noted** that the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme currently allows the horticulture and viticulture industry to employ up to 10,500 seasonal migrant workers each year, mostly from the Pacific;
- 2 **noted** the three key principles underlying the RSE scheme are:
 - 2.1 New Zealanders first: employers should seek to employ local workers first, and if they are unable to find New Zealanders, then migrant workers can be employed;
 - 2.2 “Recognition” of employers: employers must be able to demonstrate that their employment and pastoral care practices are sufficiently high quality for them to be permitted to access the scheme;
 - 2.3 Pacific preference: employers should employ migrant workers from the Pacific, unless they have an established relationship with workers outside the Pacific;
- 3 **noted** that the Minister of Social Development and the Minister of Immigration consider that the principles in paragraph 2 are being adhered to, and have considered:
 - 3.1 the forecast shortfall of workers in the horticulture and viticulture industry for 2017/18;
 - 3.2 RSE employers’ commitment to employing New Zealanders;
 - 3.3 the available accommodation to support an increased number of RSE workers;
 - 3.4 the positive impacts of the RSE scheme in Pacific Island countries; and
 - 3.5 RSE employers’ commitment to providing pastoral care and acceptable employment conditions;
- 4 **noted** that a moderate worker shortfall of approximately 600 workers has been identified for the 2017/18 horticulture and viticulture season;

- 5 **noted** the intention of the Minister of Immigration, in consultation with the Minister of Social Development, to increase the cap on the number of temporary visas that can be granted by under the RSE scheme in a 12 month period by 600 to 11,100 from the 2017/18 season;
- 6 **noted** that the Minister of Social Development and the Minister of Immigration acknowledge that there are accommodation pressures in some regions where the RSE scheme operates, and consider that the proposed increase in the cap number is appropriate given that:
- 6.1 RSE employers must satisfy the Labour Inspectorate and Immigration New Zealand that they are able to provide access to an acceptable standard of accommodation for RSE workers before they are able to recruit workers under the scheme;
- 6.2 officials across government will continue to work with the horticulture and viticulture industry to encourage employers to fulfil their intention to provide more purpose-built accommodation for RSE workers, which will reduce pressure on other accommodation types;
- 7 **noted** that the Minister of Social Development and the Minister of Immigration have directed officials to undertake further analysis of the opportunities for New Zealand workers in the horticulture and viticulture industry, and expect officials to report back in the first half of 2018.

Jenny Vickers
Committee Secretary

Present:

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern (Chair)
Rt Hon Winston Peters
Hon Kelvin Davis
Hon Grant Robertson
Hon Phil Twyford
Hon Dr Megan Woods
Hon Chris Hipkins
Hon Carmel Sepuloni
Hon Dr David Clark
Hon David Parker
Hon Iain Lees-Galloway
Hon Jenny Salesa
Hon Damien O'Connor
Hon Tracey Martin
Hon Kris Faafoi
Hon Willie Jackson

Hard-copy distribution:

Minister of Social Development
Minister of Immigration
Minister of Agriculture

Officials present from:

Office of the Prime Minister
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet