



SPOKESPERSON SIXTH CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT



**MEDIA
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Government facilitated Seasonal Worker Program with Australia a success

The Seasonal Worker Program supported by Timor-Leste's Secretariat for Vocational Training and Employment [SEPFOPE] and administered by Australia's Department of Employment is proving to be a great success. In 2016 there was an increase of 67.4% in the number of Timorese workers travelling to Australia to take part in the program, which provides seasonal labour to Australian employers in the agricultural and accommodation industries. Last year 298 Timorese workers travelled to Australia, many for their third time, to work on farms and in hotels across the country.

Timor-Leste's Ambassador to Australia, H.E. Abel Guterres, said "the program is a 'win, win' providing reliable and enthusiastic workers for Australian employers and an opportunity for the Timorese workers to develop skills and earn remittances to assist them and their families." The Secretariat for Employment Policy and Vocational Training has placed a Labour Attaché in the Embassy in Canberra to facilitate the program.

A Memorandum of Understanding struck between the two Governments in 2011 provides the basis for the program. The Secretariat for Vocational Training and Employment processes Timorese candidates to establish a 'work ready' pool that can be accessed by Australian employers. Candidates must pass a physical fitness test and also demonstrate competency in using English. Placements are for a period of up to six months and are predominantly in the area of horticulture with farming businesses that produce grains, fruits and vegetables.

In a short video about the program on the SWPTL Facebook Page Delfina Rangel, a Team Leader at Red Dirt Melons in the Northern Territory, explains that 2016 was her third placement and that she "would like to start her own business" after her experiences. Employer Ross Ingram, a Director of Bonaccord Group in Victoria, says that both groups they have had so far from Timor-Leste were "hard working, lovely people" and "a pleasure to have around."

Spokesperson, Minister of State Agio Pereira, noted "the Seasonal Workers Program is strengthening our people to people links, up-skilling our workers, providing remittances and satisfying a need in the Australian labour market. The Government congratulates all those involved and thanks the participants who are clearly good 'ambassadors' for Timor-Leste."**ENDS**



Agio Pereira
+670 77045002
agio.pereira@cdm.gov.tl
govtlmedia@gmail.com
www.timor-leste.gov.tl