

2010



## RSE MONITORING: KEY FINDINGS FROM THE 2010 EMPLOYERS' SURVEY



Prepared by Research New Zealand for the Department of Labour

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## **PURPOSE**

A multi-methods approach was used to evaluate the first two seasons of the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Policy (1 April 2007 to 31 March 2008, and 1 April 2008 to 31 March 2009).<sup>1</sup> Quantitative data for this evaluation included two online surveys of RSE and non-RSE employers undertaken by Research New Zealand in 2008 and 2009.

As part of post-evaluation monitoring, the Department has repeated a third online survey of employers in 2010. This is so that there is evidence-based information that the policy implementation continues as intended and to inform about RSE broader impacts on transformative changes within the horticulture/viticulture sector.

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<sup>1</sup> Evaluate Research. 2010. Final Evaluation Report of the Recognised Seasonal Employer Policy (2007-2009). Wellington: Department of Labour, p1. <http://dol.govt.nz/publications/research/rse-evaluation-final-report/rse-final-evaluation.pdf>

## **BACKGROUND**

This document details the results of the 2010 online and telephone survey of n=220 horticulture and viticulture employers, comprised of three primary groups of respondents.

1. Employers/contractors with Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE/SSE) status who have employed seasonal workers under the RSE scheme (n=85).
2. Employers/contractors who while not being RSEs, sourced Pacific RSE workers through another means (n=25).
3. Employers/contractors who have not employed seasonal workers under the RSE scheme (n=104).

The 2010 survey sought employers' feedback in relation to the following areas:

- How recruitment of seasonal workers was undertaken this year and expectations as to how it will be done next year.
- Amongst RSE/SSEs, difficulties or issues experienced in providing appropriate pastoral care to workers.
- Perceptions of the performance of seasonal workers sourced from various schemes in relation to their dependability, enthusiasm while working, and productivity.
- Whether there had been any character-related issues amongst seasonal workers.
- Amongst employers of RSE workers, the short-term impacts and benefits of participating in the RSE scheme.

## **KEY FINDINGS**

### **Recruitment practices**

The 2010 survey found that, as in previous years, RSE/SSEs' labour supply needs peak in the February through May period and RSE/SSEs are more likely than non-RSE/SSEs to identify February as being part of their peak season, wherein they have a particular need for seasonal workers. Key findings for recruitment practices are:

- On average, RSE/SSEs report having 54 Pacific workers admitted under the RSE scheme, and 68 Non-Kick Start State RSE workers as well. RSE/SSEs also source their seasonal workers from a number of sources:
- Eighty-seven percent source seasonal workers from Work and Income.
- Ninety-five percent source seasonal workers from the local community.
- Seventy- percent source workers from other immigrations schemes such as TRSE, WHS and VOC.
- A number of non-RSE/SSEs report sourcing Pacific RSE workers. When queried as to where they had sourced the workers in question from, most frequently this was through an RSE labour contractor.
- Eighty-percent of RSE/SSEs who employed RSE workers would like to recruit the same group of workers for next season/year. Another 14 percent would like workers from the same country, and six percent want workers from another country in the future.

### **Difficulties experienced in providing pastoral care**

In the original benchmark survey only one third of the RSE/SSEs who employed Pacific seasonal workers reported that they had no problems or difficulties providing pastoral care for their workers. In contrast, in 2010 more than three quarters of those employers who had RSE workers (78 percent) report no problems.

Eighteen percent report at least one problem in providing pastoral care arrangements for their workers.

### **Planned changes to the pastoral care provided**

More than half (59 percent) of employers of RSE workers do not plan to make any improvements to pastoral care for their workers.

Where changes are planned, employers are more likely to plan to improve the accommodation they provide (eight percent plan to do so), food at a reasonable cost (seven percent) and/or language translation for training and health and safety purposes (also seven percent).

As a result of employing RSE workers, 20 percent of employers of RSE workers have made changes to the conditions available to New Zealand or other workers (compared with 27 percent of employers of Pacific RSE workers in 2009 and 28 percent in 2008).

The most common changes employers have made are:

- Transport to and from the worksite (introduced by eight percent of RSE/SSEs).
- Health and safety inductions (introduced by seven percent of RSE/SSEs).

However, only six percent of employers of RSE workers also say they are planning to introduce changes to what they provide their New Zealand workers in the future.

## **Perceptions regarding Pacific RSE workers**

A high proportion of employers (92 percent) employed Pacific workers whom they also employed last year. Positively, 95 percent of employers say their returning Pacific RSE employees either 'all hit the ground running', or require very little retraining.

Forty-nine percent of employers say their returning Pacific RSE workers are "much more productive" than their new workers this year, and 44 percent say they were "somewhat more productive".

Pacific RSE workers are generally rated higher than other employee groups for their dependability, enthusiasm while working, and their productivity. Pacific RSE workers are viewed as significantly more:

- **Dependable** (mean 9.26 out of 10) than WHS workers (mean 7.33 out of 10) or New Zealanders (mean 5.63 out of 10).
- **Enthusiastic while working** (mean 8.96 out of 10) than WHS workers (mean 7.55 out of 10) or New Zealanders (mean 5.87 out of 10).
- **Productive** (mean 8.74 out of 10) than WHS workers (mean 7.22 out of 10) or New Zealanders (mean 5.98 out of 10).

## **Health and character issues**

Similar levels of character issues, such as not fitting in or getting along with others, were observed for Pacific RSE workers and other employee groups, with the exception of greater proportions of observed alcohol problems among Pacific RSE workers.

Seven in ten employers say that all of their Pacific workers arrived in good health. Twenty-seven percent of RSE/SSEs report that at least some of their Pacific RSE workers did not arrive in good health, with boils, pregnancies and teeth problems being noted most frequently.

## **Short-term impacts and benefits**

Roughly one third of RSEs/SSEs say they have made changes this year to various business practices they were asked about (down from two thirds in 2009). The most common changes made are:

- Improvements in workforce planning.
- Investment in new plant and equipment.
- How seasonal staff are managed and supervised.
- Training and induction practices for seasonal workers.

- Changes to health and safety practices (32 percent).

RSE/SSEs are also more likely than non-RSE/SSE employers to have made – or be planning to make – changes to their business, particularly in relation to:

- Investment in new plant and equipment (69 percent compared with 46 percent of non-RSE/SSEs)
- Expansion of the business (75 percent compared with 32 percent of non-RSE/SSEs).

Almost all RSEs/SSEs (92 percent) say that the benefits of participating in the scheme outweigh the costs, and only seven percent say the costs outweigh the benefits.

Notably, most RSE/SSEs say that participation in the programme has resulted in the following benefits to their business:

- A more stable workforce than in previous years.
- Better quality and more productive workers.
- Reduced training costs.

