Thirty Two Workers leave today for seasonal employment in Australia under the Pacific Seasonal Workers Pilot Scheme. Thirteen previously left Vanuatu last week and are now working on farms in Melbourne. Those leaving today will join the group already in Australia. The very first group that began the pilot scheme was a total of 12 individuals.

During briefing yesterday, Commissioner of Labor Lionel Kaluat advised the 32 workers, of which six are female, that they are the first group of Seasonal Workers that will travel and work on Australian farms under a new policy he termed 'Alcohol Free Brand' meaning they must not take alcohol beverages during their three months contract with the Australian farms in Melbourne.

"It is for your own good, your families, your community and the nation of Vanuatu at large. Remember that you are not just seasonal workers but you are also the Ambassadors of Vanuatu and I believe that your own families would want to see you return with good track records that they and the people of Vanuatu can be proud of," Labor Commissioner Kaluat told the workers leaving today for Australia in a pre-departure briefing yesterday morning.
The Labor Commissioner also advised the thirty two workers departing for seasonal work in Australia that they must not spend their they earn on un-necessary purchasing in Australia but inject this back into the Vanuatu economy through family development projects.

He encouraged them to have constructive plans ahead of what they would like to spend their money on upon their return to the country.

"You have team leaders among you. Please respect them and respect one another while you are in Australia.

"Come home with good report on your behavior and employment record.

"This is important because, it will not only guarantee you to take up a second opportunity but also for others in the years ahead," Labor Commissioner Kaluat cautioned the workers.

The Labor Commissioner also revealed that over 100 Australian farmers plan to pay a visit to Vanuatu in June 2012.

The purpose for their visit next year is to establish direct contact with potential workers not only in Port Vila but in other islands throughout Vanuatu.
He said this will be a boost for Vanuatu in terms of opportunity for more workers to work on farms in Australia under the pilot project. He however, stated that the visit of the 100 Australian farmers in 2012 could also mean a step forward from just being a pilot project.

“These future potentials depend on your group leaving tomorrow (today) for Australia,” said Kaluat.

He also revealed that he is proposing a piece of legislation to go before parliament that will prohibit every Vanuatu workers to the schemes in Australia and New Zealand from alcoholic beverages during their term of contract.

He warned the workers to stay out of areas that could lead them into social problems. He said while they are expected to face many challenges and culture shocks, they must prepare to maintain their Vanuatu integrity.

“The Australian Prime Minister has said during the recent Pacific Island Forum Meeting in Auckland that Australia is considering opening up employment market in Australia next year to include Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Nauru and one or two other countries in the Pacific to benefit from the same scheme which Vanuatu now enjoys,” Kaluat revealed.

He said Vanuatu must continue to maintain its position through the workers good behavior and dedication to the farmers they will be working for in Australia that will ensure increase in numbers of the workers from Vanuatu to the Australian Employment Scheme in future.