




Speech By
James Lister

MEMBER FOR SOUTHERN DOWNS

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ADJOURNMENT

Agricultural Workers, Solomon Islands

 **Mr LISTER** (Southern Downs—LNP) (6.07 pm): I rise to talk about the wonderful relationship that my community has with the Solomon Islands. Earlier in the House I heard a remark from the opposite side about the federal government and our relationship with the Solomon Islands. In one of the communities I represent, the Granite Belt, the Solomon Islanders are a cherished and valued part of our community. They leave their families behind for a year at a time to do the jobs in our agricultural industry that Australians will not do.

A couple of weeks ago I went out and visited a primary production property at night. Under lights Solomon Islanders were harvesting and doing a fantastic job. Many of them would then go on to do a day shift in the apple orchards. Many of them were making over \$1,500 a day. That money is of enormous importance to those people and their families. In the context of the Solomon Islands, even a small proportion of that is a very large sum. That gives a very warm, enduring and efficacious connection between our two nations.

When I hear the bilateral relationship with the Solomon Islands invoked in a tawdry debate it disappoints me. Whatever we may think of Mr Sogavare, whether he is on the take from the Chinese, is immaterial, because the people of the Solomon Islands are great friends of ours, they are great friends of the people in my electorate, as are many nationalities who feature prominently in the workforce that helps feed and sustain us and provide prosperity for the people I represent.

I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Solomon Islanders I met the other night and to the many others I have not met who are here as part of the federal government's Pacific worker scheme. That scheme provides not only a beneficial bilateral engagement with the people of the Solomon Islands; it also provides us with the workforce that we need to get things done. My community cannot survive without a workforce to bring in the crops that give us prosperity and food.

I say to those opposite: please do not come in here and raise matters that you do not understand. I stand with the people of the Solomon Islands and I thank them for the contribution that they make to my electorate.