

Media Release

The Hon Jaclyn Symes MLC

Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council

Minister for Regional Development

Minister for Agriculture

Minister for Resources



Thursday, 17 September 2020

HELPING FARMERS GET THE WORKERS THEY NEED THIS SEASON

The Victorian Government has announced targeted funding to attract seasonal workers to regional Victoria and ensure farmers have the hands-on-deck they need to get produce to plate.

Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes today announced a \$17 million package to help address seasonal workforce shortages brought on by the coronavirus pandemic and reiterated the call for farmers to register their workforce needs on the Working for Victoria platform to be matched with eager jobseekers.

The package includes more than \$6 million to boost the supply of COVIDSafe accommodation for seasonal workers, including working with councils and local accommodation providers like motels and caravan parks to explore accommodation options for regional seasonal workers.

To help connect workers to jobs as quickly as possible, the Government will also employ new Seasonal Workforce Coordinators who, along with new Engagement Officers, will link local industry groups, employers, labour hire agencies, local government and other stakeholders.

The Engagement Officers will also provide additional support to culturally and linguistically diverse communities, who traditionally make up a significant portion of the seasonal agricultural workforce.

Farmers and agribusinesses will be further supported with \$10 million from the *Agriculture Workforce Plan* to extend the Business Adaptation Grants – helping workplaces meet health and safety requirements and adapt to distancing changes imposed by the pandemic, with grants of up to \$300,000.

Upcoming employment opportunities in the agriculture sector include fruit and vegetable picking and packing, grains harvesting, grain receival centre work, and other roles essential to seasonal harvest.

The Victorian Government has advocated strongly for the Commonwealth to lead a national approach to support farmers ahead of the harvest and shearing seasons beginning across the country.

The Victorian Government will join other states in helping local employers take part in the Commonwealth's Seasonal Worker Programme and Pacific Labour Scheme, and will continue talks on what greater role the Commonwealth Government can play in assisting Victorian agribusinesses to find workers.

The Victorian Government led the development of the Agriculture Workers Code with New South Wales, to give certainty to farmers and agricultural workers that border closures will not stand in the way of their vital work.

Jobseekers can register now and be alerted when opportunities in the sector appear on the site. To do so and to find out more about the Agriculture Workforce Plan go to agriculture.vic.gov.au/agworkforceplan.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Jaclyn Symes

"These jobs are hard work – but they're also some of the most rewarding and could be the start of a really fruitful and exciting career in agriculture."

"I urge Victorian farmers to look at the funding available and register with Working Victoria – to connect with workers keen and able to help them get their product to plate."

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