

Media Release

Ms Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture



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MORE SEASONAL WORKFORCE SUPPORT FOR FARMERS

More than 1,000 workers will benefit from additional accommodation, transport and support services in the state's major horticulture regions, with the first grant recipients of the Andrews Labor Government's \$6 million *Seasonal Workforce Accommodation Program (SWAP)* announced today.

The Cobram and District Fruit Growers' Association (CDFGA) has received \$430,000 to support 30 farm businesses in the Cobram region to attract and provide for the workforce they need. The grant will ensure up to 500 workers will have suitable accommodation and transport, in a COVIDSafe environment.

In the Sunraysia Mallee region, up to 600 workers will be supported with a grant for the Sunraysia Mallee Ethnic Communities Council (SMECC). This not-for-profit organisation has received \$450,000 to provide pastoral care to workers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

The grant will support communication of COVIDSafe regulations, connection to community support and faith leaders, accommodation and transport advice, education, driver education, employment assistance, youth engagement and play groups.

The SWAP provides financial support for regional organisations and communities to deliver COVIDSafe accommodation, transport and support services for seasonal horticultural workers.

SWAP is helping organisations overcome common barriers that prevent local jobseekers from taking up seasonal work such as a lack of accommodation.

SWAP is one part of the Labor Government's support for industry and farm employers as they adapt to meet the challenges brought about by the coronavirus pandemic.

This support includes more than \$27 million in assistance for farm businesses and communities which has helped businesses attract local workers.

Quote attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"These projects are great examples of ideas driven by locals who have the knowledge to meet the needs of local farmers and employers."

Quote attributable to Member for Northern Victoria Mark Gepp

"This funding will help farm businesses provide the accommodation, transport and support services that contribute to a safe workplace."

Quote attributable to Cobram and District Fruit Growers' Association General Manager Karen Abberfield

"We are so pleased and relieved to receive this support. This funding will enable the CDFGA to attract extra seasonal labour to Cobram and ensure existing labour stays for the rest of the season."