

# Media Release

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



Wednesday, 17 February 2021

## **BOOSTING OUR SEASONAL WORKFORCE ACROSS VICTORIA**

The Andrews Labor Government is delivering further support for Victoria's horticultural industry, providing an additional \$19.3 million to support locals into jobs and cover the majority of the quarantine costs for Pacific Islander workers.

Jobseekers who take up seasonal work will now be eligible for bonuses of almost \$2,500, with the Government providing over \$10 million to encourage jobseekers to give the work a go and boost local workforces.

The Seasonal Harvest Sign-on Bonus will be provided in two payments, with \$810 paid after two weeks of work and a further \$1,620 paid after an additional six weeks of work.

To be eligible, workers need to complete at least 10 days' work within a one-month period to receive the first bonus and at least another 30 days within a three-month period for the additional payment.

To maximise take-up of the Sign-on Bonus, industry groups that support growers in priority harvest regions will receive funding for additional staff and resources through a new \$1 million *Seasonal Workforce Industry Support* grant program.

This funding will bolster the capacity of these groups to provide dedicated seasonal workforce support to their members – making sure businesses are well equipped to attract the workers they need.

The Victorian Government will also cover most of the cost associated with quarantining up to 1,500 Pacific Islander workers under its partnership with Tasmania through a \$7.8 million funding commitment, with industry contributing \$2,000 per worker.

This support package, developed in consultation with industry, will help address the barriers faced by farm businesses in attracting the local workforce that is crucial to this season's harvest, while also keeping the costs to industry to a minimum.

This extra support follows the comprehensive \$57 million package already provided to support industry through the coronavirus pandemic, bringing the Victorian Government's support for agriculture businesses and communities to over \$76 million.

For further details about how to apply for the sign-on bonus, visit [agriculture.vic.gov.au/bigharvest](http://agriculture.vic.gov.au/bigharvest).

### **Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas**

*"It's a big day's work, but the reward can be just as big – the Sign-on Bonus means jobseekers can take home almost \$2,500 on top of their wage."*

*"We've said from the start that while Pacific Islander workers will be important to the harvest's success, it's not a silver bullet. We're doing all that we can to help our farmers get their produce to market – but we need a national approach."*