

Media Release

Ms Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development
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Tuesday, 18 May 2021

SEASONAL WORKFORCE ACCOMMODATION BOOST IN NORTH WEST

Farmers in Victoria's north west will benefit from new accommodation for their workers, with the latest round of grants from the Andrews Labor Government providing more than \$1 million to communities in the region.

Cutri Fruit is a family-owned fruit and avocado business in the Sunraysia region which employs about 14 full-time staff, 30 casuals and up to 200 seasonal workers. This business has received a \$171,490 grant for transportable cabins to provide suitable accommodation for eight workers at its Wood Wood orchard.

Grape grower Sorbara's – at Woorinen, near Swan Hill – has received \$234,910 to install five cabins to accommodate 13 seasonal workers in COVIDSafe facilities on its farm.

Boundary Bend Olives has received \$62,000 to create a temporary COVIDSafe caravan park for workers to support the olive harvest, while Boundary Bend General Store and Restaurant has received \$84,000 to build accommodation for up to 16 workers to support local farm businesses.

Mildura City Backpackers has received \$45,000 to build COVIDSafe dining facilities, and Wood Wood Caravan Park has received \$91,000 to increase accommodation capacity for seasonal workers.

These grants are part of the Labor Government's *Seasonal Workforce Accommodation Program* which provides funding for COVIDSafe accommodation, transport and support services to the state's key horticulture regions.

Industry groups have also received support to help farmers and businesses find workers, create training resources and connect workers with mental health services as part of the Government's \$1 million *Seasonal Workforce Industry Support Program*.

Citrus Australia, Fruit Growers Victoria and the Australian Table Grape Association have all received \$100,000 to provide dedicated resources to help farm businesses secure a local workforce.

The Approved Employers of Australia, which supports businesses and the Pacific Mobility Schemes, has received \$150,000 to help businesses connect with Pacific workers.

These programs are part of the Labor Government's comprehensive \$76 million program which continues to help industry address workforce challenges brought about by the coronavirus pandemic.

For more information visit agriculture.vic.gov.au/bigharvest.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"Suitable accommodation, transport and training are all issues that can stop local workers from joining the seasonal harvest. These grants help growers to remove these barriers and attract more workers to the sector."

"We've helped secure a mix of international and local workers to support agriculture businesses now and for future seasons – these programs will empower industry to find long-term solutions to suit their sectors and their region."