

Media Release

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



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SUPPORT CONTINUES FOR SEASONAL HARVEST WORKFORCE

Farmers will continue to receive a boost to their seasonal workforce, with the Victorian Government renewing key programs across the state.

Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas announced today that the Government will extend its highly successful *Seasonal Harvest Sign-On Bonus* and quarantine pathway for Pacific workers to boost harvest workforces.

The Government's quarantine arrangement with Tasmania will continue beyond June 30 to provide a secure pathway for up to 1,500 Pacific workers.

More than 840 Pacific workers have arrived via a rolling schedule of flights driven by industry demand to support agriculture businesses from East Gippsland to the Sunraysia, with workers bringing their skill and experience to citrus, table grape, apple, pear and vegetable businesses.

The next flight will arrive in early July and remaining places will be filled over coming months as industry requires.

The popular *Seasonal Harvest Sign-On Bonus* will also continue, with more than 1,800 workers already receiving their first \$810 instalment of the bonus for completing 10 days of work.

The Sign-On Bonus is attracting jobseekers to support farmers, with workers picking, packing and pruning in an array of sectors including vegetables, fruit, olives, grapes, citrus and nuts.

The program is available to workers who are new or returning to agriculture after a three-month break and who have started a job after 17 February 2021. New workers will receive \$2,430 on top of their wages when they take on a harvest job for eight weeks.

The *Seasonal Workforce Accommodation Program* has provided more than \$3.1 million to support projects to assist workers in key horticulture regions, which will provide accommodation, transport and support services to more than 2,200 workers.

Through the *Seasonal Workforce Industry Support Program*, 12 grants totalling \$900,000 have been approved to industry organisations to help recruit and retain local workers in priority harvest regions.

These programs are part of the Victorian Government's comprehensive \$76 million support package to assist farm businesses and industry to continue to address the workforce challenges brought about by the coronavirus pandemic.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"Our approach to the challenges brought about by the coronavirus pandemic has been securing a mix of both international and local workers to help equip agriculture businesses for this season and the seasons ahead."

"The horticulture sector is worth \$3.6 billion to the Victorian economy and we are working closely with the industry as it develops a more sustainable seasonal workforce for seasons to come."

"We look forward to discussions at the Agriculture Ministers' Meeting this week as it's clear we need a longer-term national solution to this long-standing issue brought to the fore by the pandemic."

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