

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture
Acting Minister for Local Government
Acting Minister for Suburban Development



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MORE WORKERS ON THEIR WAY TO SUPPORT SEASONAL HARVEST

Farm businesses across Victoria will benefit from a boost to their seasonal workforce, with the Victorian Government extending the quarantine pathway for an additional 1,500 Pacific workers.

Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas today announced a new agreement to continue the subsidised, demand-driven quarantine pathway as part of the *Seasonal Worker Programme* and *Pacific Labour Scheme*.

This new agreement extends the Government's \$7.8 million package and landmark arrangement with the Tasmanian Government, which secured a quarantine pathway for industry to bring in up to 1,500 Pacific workers.

So far, more than 1,460 Pacific workers have arrived to support the Victorian agriculture industry, and work has already begun with approved employers and the Tasmanian and Commonwealth governments to organise an ongoing flight schedule for the coming months.

This flight schedule will be based on requests for workers from approved employers, who are responsible for organising flights under the Commonwealth's schemes.

This new agreement extends the quarantine pathway while discussions continue with Tasmania on a longer-term arrangement. Industry will continue to contribute \$2,000 per worker to the quarantine costs, with Government providing \$5,300 for each worker.

These Pacific workers are an important part of the seasonal harvest, bringing skill and experience to bolster the local workforce during agriculture's busiest periods.

The Government continues to support the agriculture industry with a comprehensive \$76 million package to address the workforce challenges brought on by the coronavirus pandemic.

The \$6 million *Seasonal Workforce Accommodation Program* and the \$1 million *Seasonal Workforce Industry Support Program* are supporting the industry to develop more worker accommodation on farms, create more workforce transport and support services and help make businesses COVIDSafe.

The *Seasonal Harvest Sign-On Bonus* is attracting jobseekers to horticulture. So far, more than 3,100 people have received the first \$810 of the bonus, with more than 1,800 people receiving the full \$2,430 for eight weeks' work.

These programs are removing barriers that prevent local workers from taking up jobs in agriculture, and are supporting industry to attract and retain more local workers for future harvests.

Quotes attributable to Victorian Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"We know these workers are an integral part of the seasonal workforce and we are pleased to continue our arrangement with the Tasmanian Government to extend this quarantine pathway for workers."

"We are supporting Victoria's \$3.6 billion horticulture industry to shift away from relying on any one particular cohort of workers and to build a more sustainable, reliable, local workforce for future harvests."

Quotes attributable to Tasmanian Minister for Primary Industries Guy Barnett

"We welcome the continuation of this quarantine arrangement with Victoria which allows us to prioritise Pacific workers to support Tasmania's agriculture industry."

"While we continue to encourage local workers, seasonal workers will help fill the shortages in our peak season."

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