

Media Release

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



Friday, 5 November 2021

SIGN-ON BONUS EXTENDED TO ATTRACT NEW HARVEST WORKERS

The Andrews Labor Government's popular Seasonal Sign-On bonus has been extended, with horticulture businesses across the state set to receive extra support in time for this summer's harvest.

Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas announced the extension today and encouraged workers new to agriculture to take up a role as part of the *Summer Seasonal Harvest Sign-On Bonus*. This will allow them to receive \$2,430 on top of their wage for 40 days' work.

This Sign-On Bonus is available for people who start work on or after 1 November and will encourage new workers into horticulture while also supporting those sectors of the industry preparing for their peak harvest in the coming months.

Employers and farmers in sectors such as stone fruit, berries and cherries will be able to use the *Summer Seasonal Harvest Sign-On Bonus* until the end of the year to attract new pickers and packers.

New workers need to complete 10 days' work and apply for the first instalment of the bonus within 30 days. They then have 90 days to complete an additional 30 days' work in order to receive the extra \$1,620 of the bonus.

The Labor Government is delivering the *Summer Seasonal Harvest Sign-On Bonus* as part of its \$10.5 million bonus program. It is anticipated around 1,100 new workers will receive the bonus to support the upcoming harvest.

Since the bonus was launched in February, more than 3,300 workers have received the first \$810 instalment of the bonus for completing 10 days' work, with more than 2,200 of these workers receiving the full payment.

Nearly 40 per cent of recipients said the main reason they applied for a harvest job was the \$2,430 bonus, and more than 95 per cent said they planned to continue to work in key horticulture regions through the seasonal harvest.

More than \$6.2 million in bonuses has been paid to date, with workers picking, packing and pruning in sectors including vegetables, citrus, grapes, olives and nuts.

This program is part of the Labor Government's comprehensive \$84 million support package to assist farm businesses and industry to continue to address the workforce challenges brought about by the pandemic.

The Government continues to support industry as it finds solutions to workforce requirements, with businesses adapting to the new challenges in various ways including more flexible workforces, varied crops and new worker attraction and retention schemes. More information is available at agriculture.vic.gov.au/bigharvest.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"Sign-on bonuses have helped thousands of people to become skilled horticulture workers while supporting hundreds of businesses across the state to manage their peak harvest period."

"The Sign-On Bonus program demonstrates there are local workers ready and willing to take on harvest work and we encourage them to come forward over summer."

Media contact: Nadia Dimattina 0438 701 306 | Nadia.dimattina@minstaff.vic.gov.au