

# Media Release

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



Wednesday, 10 November 2021

## **BOOST FOR FARMERS TO GROW THEIR HARVEST WORKFORCE**

The Andrews Labor Government is backing more safe accommodation, transport and support services to help the agriculture industry as it manages seasonal workforce challenges.

Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas today met with members of the Cobram and District Fruit Growers' Association, which has received various grants from the Victorian Government to support its seasonal workforce.

The Association received \$429,000 to assist local growers to provide COVIDSafe transport and accommodation for up to 500 workers in the region through the Government's *Seasonal Workforce Accommodation Program (SWAP)*.

SWAP has provided \$3.1 million to 13 regional projects to deliver COVIDSafe accommodation, transport and support services for up to 2,000 seasonal horticultural workers.

The Cobram and District Fruit Growers' Association also received \$51,450 to employ an industry liaison officer to help farmers attract and retain workers, and to develop online training materials for new workers, and education programs to ensure safer workplaces.

The work is focused on young people in the region and is being delivered in coordination with Moira Shire and the Goulburn Murray Local Learning and Employment Networks. Training materials are being produced in collaboration with Food and Fibre Gippsland.

This grant is part of the Government's \$1 million *Seasonal Workforce Industry Support Program (SWISP)*, which has assisted 13 organisations and groups that support businesses in priority harvest sectors and regions.

Fruit Growers' Victoria has also benefited from both funding programs, receiving \$100,000 through SWISP for an industry liaison officer to support farm businesses to attract and retain workers while ensuring the workplace is COVIDSafe.

Fruit Growers Victoria also received \$365,000 as part of SWAP to boost transport and accommodation for seasonal workers as well as providing pastoral care to vulnerable workers including culturally and linguistically diverse community members.

These projects are part of the Labor Government's \$84 million package to support the Victorian agriculture industry as it recovers from the pandemic and builds a sustainable workforce for the future.

These programs are focused on removing barriers that have traditionally prevented people from taking up what has proven to be a critical job in agriculture's seasonal harvest.

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

*"Tackling issues such as accommodation, transport and recruitment through multiple programs is a good way to ensure farm businesses have greater access to seasonal workers now and in the future."*

*"These are great examples of empowering industry organisations to create their own tailored workforce solutions."*

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