XX September 2020

PREMIER

ADDRESS

BLOCK

Email: [PREMIER’S](mailto:daniel.andrews@parliament.vic.gov.au) EMAIL ADDRESS

CC: Agriculture Minister

Dear Premier

**RE: Horticulture industry workforce shortages are now urgent**

I write to request urgent action to address significant shortages in the horticulture harvest workforce. The combination of international and state border closures and the regional location of many of these jobs has created significant labour shortages that will result in unpicked crops, job losses for those Australians permanently employed in the industry and significant financial losses for the industry and those supporting businesses engaged throughout the supply chain.

COMPANY NAME grows CROP TYPE in STATE and relies on a mix of Australians and temporary migrant workers to harvest our crops. We employ up to XXX annually and rely on many of these workers to perform harvest roles such as planting, picking and packing. Given the labour intensive nature of horticulture, this work is integral to the ongoing supply of fresh produce to all Australians. Without this labour, crops will go unpicked and the planting of next year’s crop will be postponed or even worse some growers will be forced to pull out their entire crops and simply walk away from their farms.

A deficiency in harvest workforce numbers also has the potential to create shortages on supermarket shelves and result in higher fruit and vegetables prices for all Australians. To take steps to avoid this situation or at the very least mitigate the impacts, we are asking the government to act on the following to ensure the industry can access the necessary volume of temporary workers to harvest our crops:

1. Provide a $1,200 relocation payment to assist Australian workers to meet additional costs associated with relocating regionally to undertake harvest work
2. Restart the Seasonal Worker Program (SWP) and Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) to provide access to an experienced harvest workforce by:
   * Formally “opting in” to the restart the SWP and PLS
   * Establish and formalise a pathway to allow these workers to enter Australia, undertake quarantine and work in COVID safe workplaces
   * Set dates for the arrivals of these workers that enable industry to better plan and manage their harvests.

These measures requested above will assist in alleviating the current and urgent workforce shortage and importantly, will assist with our ability to make plans for our business into 2021. We appreciate your consideration of this matter and look forward to working with you to ensure that Australians continue to have access to fresh fruit and vegetables.

Yours Sincerely

SIGNATURE  
  
NAME, TITLE