



Media Release

7 September 2021

For immediate release

Extension of quarantine pathway provides some relief for Victorian horticulture producers

AUSVEG VIC, Victoria's peak industry body for vegetable and potato growers, welcomes the long-awaited announcement that the Victorian Government will extend the quarantine pathway with Tasmania to allow up to 1,500 workers from the Pacific Islands as part of the Seasonal Worker Programme and Pacific Labour Scheme, though believes that growers must be given more certainty they will be able to access workers after this extension.

This agreement extends the quarantine pathway with Tasmania, with industry continuing to contribute \$2,000 per worker for their quarantine costs.

Given the seriousness of the current labour shortage, AUSVEG VIC have been advocating for future planning between the Victorian and Tasmanian governments to allow the smooth and safe extension of the worker quarantine pathway once these new 1,500 workers have been allocated.

According to AUSVEG VIC President and third-generation Victorian vegetable grower Paul Gazzola, the announcement from Agriculture Minister Mary-Anne Thomas will provide growers with confidence that they will have access to the workers they need for this harvest season through the Seasonal Worker Programme and Pacific Labour Scheme.

"There is strong demand for workers from the Pacific Islands and strong uptake of workers from this pathway. Future consideration should be given to additional safe quarantine pathways, potentially through pre-departure and/or on-farm quarantine," believes Mr Gazzola.

A recent report by EY into horticulture's harvest workforce needs estimates there could be a shortage of up to 24,000 workers this year across the country, with estimates that up to 19,000 of the total worker shortage will be experienced by Victoria during its peak harvest.

"I urge all Victorian growers to plan ahead as early as possible and lodge their workforce needs as modeling from EY shows demand for labour in Victoria is projected to peak this season," Mr Gazzola said.

AUSVEG VIC looks forward to engaging with the Victorian and Federal Government into the future to secure a local and international workforce that will give the industry the security and reliability it needs.

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