



19 October 2018,

Dear Minister,

***Fruit Growers Victoria disappointed with governments approach to workforce issues***

On behalf of Victorian fruit growers, I would like to express our disappointment with your government's approach to resolving the continuing workforce issues facing our industry.

The Prime Minister's recent suggestion that instead of introducing an ag visa, Australia's horticulture businesses are the solution for dealing with city-based, long term unemployed is extremely disappointing.

Forced labour is not the answer to our workforce challenges. We need seasonal workers who are motivated to work and respectful of our businesses.

We have in the past engaged in good faith with government programs to attract Australians into seasonal work, such as the seasonal work incentives trial. As much as we would like to use local workers, the reality is that these programs do not work. Jobseekers placed on farms are generally seeking full time work close to home, not seasonal work in rural areas. The result is conflict with employers, fruit being damaged and job tasks not being completed.

Victorian fruit growers need a dedicated agricultural visa to address workforce shortages during critical harvest periods. This should be an urgent priority for government. In the meantime, we are willing to engage with your office on improvements to existing programs for immediate effect, in particular the Seasonal Worker Program.

Our difficulties in attracting seasonal employees represents a real challenge to the sustainability of our industry. We are disappointed that your government has not approached this policy issue with the respect our members deserve.

Yours sincerely,

*Mitchell McNab*

**Mitchell McNab**  
**Chairman,**  
**Fruit Growers Victoria**



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