

Media Release



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Webster out of touch with horticulturalists

Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) Vice President Emma Germano has described Member for Mallee, Dr Anne Webster's comments surrounding the Regional Agricultural Migration Program (RAMP) as out of touch.

Dr Webster's persistent pursuit of the RAMP initiative demonstrates that she is not across the labour issues impacting horticulturalists in her electorate.

"Dr Webster was quick to engage with industry when newly elected, and offered her assurance that she understood the situation whereby industry has become victim to red tape and poor policy decision. She promised the Mallee she would cross the floor if necessary, but it now appears she has abandoned her farmers in order to toe the party line, said Ms Germano.

"There are many aspects of RAMP that are not fit for purpose. To suggest the lack of uptake betrays the growers calls for a workable solution is laughable. It is clear there are significant barriers to the adoption of the RAMP," Ms Germano continued.

The Federal Department of Agriculture has recently completed a series of workshops across regional Victoria to assess the labour requirements of the horticultural industry. The industry has been loud, consistent and clear highlighting the importance of an agricultural visa.

"The government are aware of the issues impacting the sector, but continue to ignore the calls of industry and keep their head in the sand on this critical issue. Having local members of parliament and local governments imposing inadequate schemes on producers is completely counter-productive," said Ms Germano.

"The industry is beyond frustrated with being ignored time and time again. We are well and truly over having programs and schemes pushed on to industry that do nothing to fix the issue. It is time for the government to sit down with industry and create a tailored solution to assist with a transition to compliance," Ms Germano concluded.

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