

Media Release



4 May 2020

Buy Aussie flowers and support our regional economy this Mother's day

Mother's Day 2020 will be like no other and provide an opportunity to support our local floristry industry.

VFF Vice President Emma Germano said that due to COVID-19 restrictions, the percentage of imported flowers has fallen dramatically.

"This will take the guess work out of buying local and mean that consumers will know that the flowers we buy this week for our mothers and grandmothers are Aussie grown," Ms Germano said.

"This is a great opportunity to support our local floristry industry and our farming economy.

"Victorians would be shocked to learn that 40 per cent of the flowers we usually buy are imported from as far away as Ecuador, Kenya and Singapore, Columbia. Of course, COVID-19 has changed all that and that's not a bad thing as local florists are stocked with local flowers."

Ms Germano Victoria accounts for almost 60 per cent of Australia's national flower production but consumers currently have no way of knowing if they are buying local or from overseas and that's just not good enough in this day and age.

"Consumers deserve greater clarity about where their flowers come from: the Australian grown label is good enough for produce so we should be applying the same to flowers," Ms Germano said.

"The Commonwealth Department of Agriculture will review new labelling rules in the next 18 months. Consumer-demand drives country-of-origin labelling reforms and that is why we believe consumers should be given the opportunity to make educated purchasing decisions about which flowers to buy.

"Imports of cut flowers and foliage arriving in Australia have increased more than fivefold since 2007 which equates to AUD\$75 million in flowers that are imported according to UN Comtrade."

There are significant biosecurity risks associated with the importation of cut flowers and foliage. In fact, cut flowers and foliage represent the highest rate of live pests, of all goods imported to Australia. This poses a substantial threat to Australia's horticultural and agricultural industries.

"The situation became so dire that the Australian Government was forced to introduce tougher controls including multiple pest control measures (for production, packaging and the export system) in 2018 after finding that some countries were exporting infested consignments of flowers and cut foliage up to 80 per cent of the time," Ms Germano said.

"We think that hasn't gone far enough. We continue to be concerned about biosecurity and we want to see the labelling rules change to enable Victorians to make educated choices and support our local farmers.

Farrer House 24-28 Collins Street Melbourne 3000

Ph. 1300 882 833 | Fax. 03 9207 5500 | E-mail. vff@vff.org.au | www.vff.org.au

“Getting as close as you can to the local source is often the best way to ensure that the flowers you buy are sustainable: think of the environmental damage that flying in close to half of our cut flowers generates.”

Ironically, some of our international competitors are starting their own campaigns such as ‘grown not flown’ to protect their industries.

The Australian floristry sector generated \$1.6 billion in revenue and employed 6300 workers in 2018, according to the [Australian Industry Skills Committee](#).

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Media Contacts:

Amelia Bitsis, Victorian Framers Federation, 0429 827 604

Fast Facts:

- Victoria accounts for 60 per cent of flower production in Australia; NSW accounts for 25 per cent.
- 30 per cent increase in flowers and foliage imported to Australia in from overseas over last 10 years
- 40 per cent of the flowers they buy are imported from as far away as Ecuador, Kenya and Singapore, Columbia, Thailand, Malaysia and China.
- They are cheaper to produce because of labour costs and obviously the climate is particularly good for roses, lilies and chrysanthemums
- Reliance on imported flowers and foliage presents a substantial threat to Australia’s horticultural and agricultural industries.
- Of all goods imported into Australia, cut flowers and foliage represent the highest rate of live pest interceptions by the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture.
- Average interception rates of live pests found on cut flower and foliage imports of around 60 per cent, with some countries having 80 per cent of their cut flower and foliage consignments arriving in Australia with live pests.
- We are starting to see a boutique sustainable flower industry in Victoria known as the slow flower movement.
- Some of our bigger flower producing towns include Macedon, Daylesford, Kyneton, East Gippsland