



Media Release

28 February 2019

Immigration hits Sunraysia region with force – where's the visa?

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) has been made aware of a crackdown by Australian Border Force in the Sunraysia region over the past week, seeking to identify illegal workers.

“We believe that Australian Border Force officials have descended on the Sunraysia region, visiting farms in an effort to identify illegal workers,” said Ms Emma Germano, VFF Horticulture Group President.

“According to local media reports, on Saturday 25 illegal workers were found in Robinvale and a further 17 were located earlier in the week.

“We believe that since the appearance of Australian Border Force officials in the region, a substantial number of workers have chosen not to turn up to work in fear of retribution.

“There are currently many growers at the peak of their harvest period and, as a result of the reduced labour availability, they are now unable to pick their fruit, with some cancelling orders bound for overseas markets.

“This is a perfect example of what we as an industry have been trying to avoid. We have been calling for an agriculture visa to ensure growers have a reliable workforce.

“Such a visa would also allow hard working people that are willing and able to work, the opportunity to do so without the fear of exportation, as is the case in other sectors of the economy.

“The VFF Horticulture Group is currently surveying growers in the Sunraysia to assess their labour challenges, in a bid to gather meaningful data.

“Many businesses will be facing financial difficulty, as a result of fruit not being picked on time due to the workforce shortage of legal workers. This is frustrating for growers and saddening to know that businesses are at risk due to the inability of our government to act.

This week's events highlight to government that we are in urgent need of meaningful solutions to allow our growers to operate with an effective and ethical workforce,” said Ms Germano.

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About the VFF

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) is dedicated to representing the interests of farmers and making a positive difference to their businesses and communities. We strive to create an environment for our members, our farmers, that enables profitable, safe, sustainable production to ensure an enduring social licence in a community that respects and values the sector.