

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE**

**TO**

**The Senate Standing Committee on  
Employment, Workplace Relations and  
Education**

***“Perspectives on the future of the harvest  
labour force”***

**Department of Employment and Workplace  
Relations**

## **Theme One – Improved Labour Market Information**

The Report noted the absence of empirical data to support claims of a labour shortage in the horticultural sector.

### **Government Response**

The Australian Government will continue to monitor seasonal labour demand and supply issues in the horticulture industry, particularly through the Harvest Labour Service and the National Harvest Labour Information Service (NHLIS).

The Australian Government, through the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), will continue to closely monitor labour market trends in the horticulture industry, through consultation with key stakeholders (including State and Territory Government Departments, employers and industry bodies) to identify and address the industry's skill and labour needs.

## **Theme Two – Practicalities of a Seasonal Contract Labour Scheme**

The Report noted that prudence requires the Australian Government to make contingency plans for introducing contract harvest labour in as early as five years.

### **Government Response**

The Australian Government will continue to review temporary and permanent migration arrangements to ensure they reflect the genuine skill needs of Australian industry and do not represent an impost on the Australian economy.

In the case of employer-sponsored migration arrangements, the Australian Government will continue to ensure these arrangements: comply with Australia's international commitments (including those relating to the movement of natural persons under General Agreement on Trades in Services); do not result in the displacement of Australian nationals; and complement domestic recruitment and training initiatives.

## **Theme Three – Harvest Labour Initiatives (Supplementary Comment)**

The Harvest Labour Trail should be reviewed with a view to expanding the range of services available and streamlining the process of referrals.

### **Government Response**

DEWR will continue to work closely with the NHLIS to monitor harvest labour supply and demand issues to look for solutions to the mobilisation of 'out of area' workers to harvest regions. DEWR will investigate the possibility of expanding the NHLIS's role to examine areas where labour shortages regularly occur. The NHLIS will be responsible for liaising directly with grower and grower groups to raise their awareness of HLS providers, the NHLIS and the Harvest Trail website, and assist them in planning and satisfying their future harvest labour needs.