



Media Release

3 October 2019

ENSURING INTEGRITY IN EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES BEST WAY TO ATTRACT AND RETAIN WORKERS IN FRESH PRODUCE INDUSTRY

The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance welcomes the release of research by the highly respected Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARES) which highlights that while there are undoubtedly many challenges in recruiting people to work in specific locations and to harvest crops when needed, more than half the employees working on an average Australian fruit and vegetable farm are locals.

The ABARES findings are consistent with data from the Australian Fresh Produce Alliance, whose members employ a combined 22,000 people across Australia, with more than half of the full time equivalent jobs being performed by Australians.

“Alliance members have already committed to the development of a permanent local workforce focused on creating opportunities for young people, while developing practical solutions for permanent and seasonal harvest requirements. Most importantly, Alliance members are committed to engaging labour in a manner which is not only legal, but also ethical and promotes the integrity of the industry. This recognises the expectations of our customers and the end consumers of our produce,” said Michael Rogers, CEO, Australian Fresh produce Alliance.

The fruit and vegetable industry is the fastest growing agricultural industry in Australia and there are challenges securing employees in an industry that is growing so rapidly. The way forward is to ensure that we are providing meaningful opportunities for people to work in our industry.

“Fruit and vegetables are by nature perishable and often require a seasonal workforce to get the freshest produce to working families across Australia. The fresh produce industry needs to stand up and demonstrate that it is serious about developing a permanent workforce and ensuring the integrity of its employment practices. Shortages of employees is simply not a valid reason to employ people outside the law. Ensuring integrity in the way people are employed is the best way to attract and retain workers”, said Mr Rogers.

Contact – Michael Rogers – 0409 648 911

About the AFPA - The Australian Fresh Produce Alliance (AFPA) is made up of Australia’s key fresh produce growers and suppliers. The members include Costa Group, Perfection Fresh, Montague, One Harvest, Pinata Farms, Fresh Select, Mitolo Group, Mackay’s Banana Marketing, Driscoll’s, 2PH Farms, LaManna Premier Group, Rugby Farming, Freshmax and Fresh Produce Group. These businesses represent half the industry turnover of the Australian fresh produce (fruit and vegetables) sector - \$4.5 billion of the \$9.1 billion total; 1,000 plus growers through commercial arrangements and more than 15,000 direct employees through peak harvest, and up to 25,000 in the grower network.