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MEDIA ALERT
Attention Chiefs of Staff/Editors

Seasonal worker agreement extension welcomed

Fruit Growers Tasmania welcome the Tasmanian Government's announcement on the extension of its seasonal worker agreement with Victoria.

The unique arrangement sees the Tasmanian Government quarantine seasonal workers from the Pacific Islands, while the Victorian Government quarantines Australians returning from overseas on Tasmania's behalf.

Peter Cornish, CEO of Fruit Growers Tasmania, said "This agreement, in place since January this year, has benefitted both Tasmanian and Victorian agribusinesses and ensured Tasmanian fruit growers had a supply of international workers to assist with the harvest in the past season.

"We welcome this extension of the agreement between the two states and our Government's commitment that it will not impact the number of seasonal workers required for Tasmanian farms, with those workers continuing to be a priority. Any initiative that sees additional seasonal workers enter the country to work in agriculture is a positive outcome for all states.

"Not only did the previous agreement see some 1500 more workers arrive for Victorian farms, it also allowed over 200 workers in smaller cohorts enter for Tasmanian businesses. Without the Victorian agreement this would have been unlikely to happen."

Fruit Growers Tasmania hopes the Tasmanian Government will soon complete its risk assessment that currently excludes Tonga and a number of other countries from sending workers to Tasmania.

Mr Cornish added, "While we agree the health and welfare of Tasmanians must be at the forefront of the government's considerations, we trust a sensible approach will be taken to a country like Tonga that has had no COVID-19 cases since the start of the pandemic, and

has supported over 2,200 of its workers coming to work in Australia with no COVID-19 cases over the last year.

“The Seasonal Worker Program is a very well managed and regulated program that provides many positives both to Australian farmers as well as the Pacific Island nations involved, especially at a time when many of these nations are suffering from a lack of international tourism.”

Ends

For further information contact:

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About FGT - Fruit Growers Tasmania (FGT) is the peak body representing apple, pear, cherry, berry and stonefruit growers in Tasmania. It is a not-for-profit industry association run by Tasmania's growers, for Tasmania's fruit growers.