

## Position Paper – Labour and Workforce

### The Issues and Our Position

All sectors of our industry are dependent on the availability of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled staff for casual and permanent roles. Due to the often remote employment locations and the sometime harsh environmental conditions within which staff are required to work, the sector has significant challenges in accessing and retaining the staffing and skills necessary to most effectively support all farming operations. These challenges are often most pronounced during peak operational periods such as harvests.

The potential negative impact of staff shortages on individual businesses and on the industry as a whole can be extremely significant and threaten the successful harvesting of an entire years investment in crops.

For this reason NT Farmers gives very high priority to its role in advocating for policy settings and industry arrangements that deliver improved labour sourcing options and mitigate the risks of an over-dependence on one source of casual harvest labour (ie: the working holiday makers).

NT Farmers encourages high standards of employment practices across the sector and will work with industry and stakeholders to continually improve the capacity and reputation of the industry as a good employer.

NT Farmers strongly encourages high standards of occupational health and safety practices across the industry and will work to facilitate ongoing improvements in managing and mitigating the risks of workplace injury to its members and staff.

### Our Commitment

NT Farmers will:

- advocate strongly for expansion and improvements to the range of visa options for the sourcing of skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled staff for permanent and casual employment roles in the industry;
- advocate strongly for the simplification and streamlining of visa processes;
- work with farmers to continually improve and build capacity for strong staffing, health and safety outcomes across the industry;
- work with stakeholders to facilitate excellent communication with members in respect of staff recruitment options, best practice staff management and work health and safety issues; and
- advocate for dedicated resources being made available to directly support farmers with all workforce planning issues.

### Our Expectations

NT Farmers seeks and expects:

- adequate recognition of the importance of appropriate government policy settings that support the access and availability of staff for business critical activities;
- collaborative engagement with agencies and industry bodies to facilitate and deliver strong awareness of all employment sourcing options and the enhancement of industry staff recruitment and retention strategies; and

- early engagement with NT Farmers in respect of any proposed changes to policy settings that might impact staff availability.

### Our Agenda Items

- Expansion of options for casual and permanent staffing requirements for our members, such as but not limited to:
  - the introduction of a new agriculture labour visa;
  - the addition of new source countries for the existing seasonal worker program;
  - the addition of new skills classifications for the 457 visa for remote and rural employers and for the specific needs of agriculture sector;
  - work for the Dole/Community Development Program;
  - Job Services Australia; and
  - access to corrections/prison labour.
- Secure ongoing support and funding for the dedicated Workforce Planning Coordinator role within NT Farmers.
- Reduction in the regulatory and administrative costs through the simplification and streamlining of visa application processes for:
  - 457 Visa – particularly where existing overseas staff have already proved their skills and capacity; and
  - The Seasonal Worker Program.
- Strengthening of industry capacity to manage WH&S risks and compliance, including the development and introduction of a generic WH&S risk assessment and management framework.
- Building of the industries capacity to adequately accommodate seasonal harvest workers;
- Strengthening of industry capacity to effectively manage the sourcing, retention and development of skilled staff.
- Engagement with service provider and stakeholders to improve the provision of management and technical training for staff engaged in the farming sector.
- Support the review of labour hire firms and implementation of an accreditation scheme.
- Increase access to job ready workforce training and encouragement of workers returning to workforce.
- Investigate opportunities to align workers with farms through the use of social media and other avenues.