



Farm Labour Shortages

Over recent weeks I have been highlighting the looming crisis in the agricultural sector centred around farm labour shortages. I have called on the Premier and Agricultural Minister to do more to assist our farmers with sourcing seasonal workers and contributing towards the cost of on-farm quarantine. Unfortunately, at the time of writing we are no closer to a solution.

No one is asking for shortcuts but surely providing safe and affordable food to Queensland families and supporting primary industry should also be a priority.

To make matters worse, in recent days the Queensland Health Minister has refused to advise why Queensland did not take up the offer from the Federal Government to quarantine Pacific Island workers before they come to Australia so that, on arrival, they can get straight to work.

With every passing day we get closer to fruit and vegetables either not being available or being out of reach for families and our horticulturalists, and the communities they are part of, being sluggish with massive financial losses.

Spread the word

Growers who are desperate for farm labour are telling me that securing approval for their plan to provide safe and effective quarantine for workers is almost impossible and, when it does happen, it takes far too long.

In response to those comments, I have called on the Queensland government to establish

a taskforce, made up of senior representatives from Queensland Health and the Department of Agriculture & Fisheries to identify and fast track opportunities to get these workers on the ground and working.

Office of Dale Last MP | Member for Burdekin



20 April 2021

MEDIA RELEASE

Last calls for farm labour taskforce

A taskforce aimed at filling farm labour shortages could be the answer to farmers' prayers, according to Member for Burdekin Dale Last.

Almost six months after the Federal Government announced 22,000 pre-vetted Pacific Islander workers were available to fill labour shortages on farms, Mr Last said there was still a significant level of uncertainty within the industry and it was time the State Government considered a more proactive approach.

"We're well past the time for discussion, with only weeks to go until this year's harvest season begins for many horticulture crops, it's now or never," Mr Last said.

"In a little more than six months the State Government would have managed to bring 550 Pacific Islander workers to the state, a mere 2.5 per cent of the 22,000 pre-vetted Pacific Islander workforce to a state that provides much of Australia's fresh fruit and vegetables."

"A specific taskforce encompassing representatives from both Queensland Health and the Department of Agriculture and Fisheries could put feet on the ground to better identify and potentially fast track the distribution of workers across the state."

Mr Last said the Burdekin district was expected to receive almost 80 of the pre-vetted Pacific Islander work force in the coming month but would all be totally absorbed by one farm.

"My office is continuing to take calls from farmers who are extremely anxious about the upcoming season and are still to this day, trying to get through red tape," Mr Last said.

"The state government may say they are assisting the industry but we are yet to see them commit to proactive measures that could do some good in fast tracking the process and going some way to ensuring crops are not left in the fields to rot."

The reality is that, to date, progress on this issue has been painfully slow. In order to make real progress, I believe we need to ensure this problem gets the attention it deserves.

A copy of the media release sent yesterday, as well as other media releases I have issued, are available via the link below. Feel free to share this media release through your networks

and, as we have seen before, the unity of all primary producers in fighting for a fair go is, once again, essential.

[**Dale's Media Releases**](#)

My office is always available if you need help or advice on this or any other matter on 1800 817 594 or click below to send me an email.

[**Contact Dale**](#)
