

## APAL rejects calls to axe Working Holiday Maker visa program

Australia's peak apple and pear body, APAL, has rejected calls to axe the Working Holiday Maker visa program in a bid to increase opportunities for more Australians to work on farms.

APAL CEO Phil Turnbull said the Working Holiday Maker program was a vital supplementary source of mobile workers.

"Any worker wanting ongoing employment picking fruit needs to be willing and able to continuously relocate as the harvest unfolds – that's why it has proven popular with holiday makers."

"It's also the key reason why it's not as popular with local workers who, like many of us, place a much greater value on long-term employment in their community and with their friends, families and networks. Seasonal work can't provide this stability."

"We have quite a few local fruit pickers who are happy to return each year for work in their local region, but they have little or no intention of extending their employment by relocating interstate as the harvest progresses."

Mr Turnbull said any and all allegations of predatory practices by employers or recruitment agencies must be investigated and individuals held accountable.

"These behaviours have no place in our industry and are a fundamental betrayal of the trust of our employees and our consumers."

Mr Turnbull said the industry was meeting consumer and community demands for evidence of ethical and responsible practices.

"Programs such as [Fair Farms](#) provide confidence to consumers, the community and across our industry that we are meeting community standards."

"Today's announcement shows a complete lack of empathy. It offers no practical assistance for unemployed Australians looking for long term employment, threatens the affordability and supply of fresh produce for Australian consumers who are already struggling with the financial impacts of Covid-19 and creates unnecessary uncertainty for visa holders currently in Australia," said Mr Turnbull.

*Apple and Pear Australia Limited (APAL) is Australia's peak industry body representing Australia's \$600 million apple and pear industry. APAL's international marketing operations promote Australian apple and pear exports around the globe. APAL owns the world's leading fresh produce brand, Pink Lady®, in over 100 countries.*