

HUMAN RESOURCES & INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Policy statement

The issues

Queensland's fruit and vegetable industry employs around 25,000 permanent and part time people. The industry also employs a large number of casual and seasonal workers all year round. The horticulture industry is a major source of employment in regional Queensland and an economic driver for rural and regional economies.

Farm labour is the most significant cost and perhaps the most critical factor in ensuring the smooth running of field preparation, planting, maintenance, harvesting and packing activities on-farm. It follows that human resources are growers' most valuable resource. However, labour availability and skill shortages remain prominent in the horticulture industry and continue to constrain our farmers. These shortages arise from a number of factors including competition from other industries, seasonal aspects and the nature of employment.

Our position

Effective human resource management is essential to maintaining a productive and sustainable horticulture industry. To remain viable the industry must effectively and efficiently manage and develop solutions to ongoing and emerging workforce issues and challenges.

Growcom believes that to maintain an efficient and highly productive workplace and meet market demands, farm owners and managers need flexibility in workplace arrangements, along with the ability to attract and retain appropriately skilled staff.

Our commitment

Growcom's commitment is to:

- Support members in their efforts to improve their business, staff management and leadership skills.
- Achieve greater flexibility, efficiency and productivity in the operation of horticultural enterprises.
- To lobby for wages and conditions that attract and retain skilled employees while improving productivity and returns to growers.
- Encourage employers and employees to develop skills and competencies essential for the job.
- Encourage employers and employees to be innovative and flexible in their approach to work.
- Encourage employers and employees to achieve permanent best practice standards in all aspects of organisations' operations.
- Investigate solutions to minimise the impact of ongoing and emerging workforce issues and challenges.

Our expectations

Growcom expects that the horticulture industry will be able to target and access labour markets that suit our business needs. Growcom also expects that employers will have appropriate human resource management skills which pursue best practice standards in all aspects of their operation, including skills development and recognition, innovation and flexibility, and workplace health and safety.

Growcom expects that the needs of the industry are best accommodated by the formulation of an industrial relations framework which recognises the particular needs of the horticulture industry and contains sufficient flexibility to meet the specific and distinctive requirements of each enterprise and its employees.

Our agenda items

Issues to be considered under the human resources and industrial relations area include:

- Workforce plan for the horticulture industry.
- Guest worker initiative.
- Immigration issues including employment of backpackers and restoration of access to the 457 visa.
- Giving growers the best advice and tools to be good businesspeople and employers.
- Attracting and retaining skilled and reliable staff under flexible workplace arrangements.
- Wage arrangements that are based on the workplace, taking local conditions into account during negotiations over wages and other employment-related conditions.
- A simplified and more flexible industrial relations system to increase the efficiency of farm businesses and reduce compliance costs.
- Improvements in productivity.
- Minimal/streamlined documentation for employment declarations and checking work entitlements.
- Identifying skills required and linking those skills to relevant and industry-appropriate training programs (on-farm etc.)