

# **WORKPLACE HEALTH & SAFETY**

## **Policy Statement**

### **The Issues**

Workplace health and safety affects every horticulture business in Queensland. Rural work often involves a variety of tasks, in extremely busy periods and often in physical isolation from other workers. In addition, varying climatic conditions, the exposure of family members and visitors to risk (as the family home is on the farm), the use of seasonal labour forces and other factors expose people to potentially dangerous situations.

There are many specific hazards and injury risks that need to be identified and carefully managed by business owners and employers. In the horticulture industry, these risks can arise from hazards that include plant and equipment, hazardous chemicals, electricity, manual tasks, rough terrain, harsh environmental conditions, dangerous animals, insects and zoonotic diseases as well as other people.

As a result of the nature of horticultural work, business owners and employers implement systems and practices to reduce the health and safety risks to individuals and to avoid any negative impacts on their businesses. These practices are particularly important when taking into consideration the large number of people (including seasonal workers) that undertake work on horticulture enterprises and who may not necessarily be aware of all the potential risks involved.

Workplace health and safety legislation requires employers and managers to implement a risk management approach to health and safety hazards in the workplace. These risks need to be addressed using appropriate risk management procedures. There are significant opportunities in the horticulture industry to develop and promote workplace health and safety systems that protect workers, growers and others that enter farms. However, the horticulture industry does require flexible and practical workplace health safety systems that are suitable to this industry's working environment, rather than those transplanted from other sectors.

### **Our position**

Growcom believes it is important to promote programs and information services that protect farmers and employees in Queensland workplaces from the risk of injury and illness. These need to be practical, flexible and applicable to the farm work environment.

### **Our commitment**

Growcom supports the adoption of practical workplace health and safety measures, with preference to the 'designing out' of major on-farm hazards to improve workplace health and safety, rather than inflexible or unclear regulations. Growcom will continue to provide updates to members on any changes to workplace health and safety regulations and

accepted practices as well as encourage participation in relevant training sessions on offer throughout the state.

## **Our expectations**

Growcom expects that workplace health and safety initiatives and practices are workable, efficient and well considered. They should protect all people working on farms – owners, managers, workers (including contractors and service providers), family members, and visitors, while recognising the competitive business environment in which horticultural enterprises operate.

There are several ways in which risks can be controlled in the workplace. They include:

- Designing out hazards and designing in control measures.
- Substituting the material or processes associated with equipment or plant with a less hazardous one.
- Redesigning plant or work processes to reduce or eliminate risk.
- Separating or isolating the hazard from people.
- Adjusting the time or conditions of risk exposure.
- Using appropriately designed and properly fitted personal protective equipment where other control measures are not practicable.
- Taking into consideration information and education provided by Government and industry stakeholders.

Growcom expects that the horticulture industry will adopt an attitude to improving its standards and systems for workplace health and safety in order to establish a safe working environment.

## **Our agenda items**

Issues to be considered under the workplace health and safety policy area include:

- Owners, managers and workers being aware of and being proactive on workplace health and safety.
- Supporting programs directed at providing owners and managers with the skills they require to implement sound work place health and safety practices.
- Injury prevention, including preventing injuries amongst family members and visitors.
- Minimising the impact of injury/illness on people's health along with farm productivity/business.
- Developing, encouraging and maintaining a culture of safety and training.
- Including farm safety as part of business risk management.
- Grower involvement in policy development.
- Practical safety programs for farm owners, managers and workers.
- Financial incentives and phase-in periods to maximise uptake of changes demanded by legislation.
- WorkCover premiums reflective of performance.
- Funding for workplace health and safety research, monitoring and risk reduction strategies and processes.