

Media Release

Andrew Broad

Assistant Minister to the Deputy Prime Minister
Member for Mallee

Tuesday 6 November 2018

ADDRESSING LABOUR SHORTAGE ISSUES ACROSS THE MALLEE

Growers and farmers across the North West Victoria will receive more support following the Coalition Governments new changes to two visa programs.

Federal Member for Mallee Andrew Broad has welcomed the changes which will see the Working Holiday Maker (WHM) Visa program altered to target workforce shortages in regional Australia.

“This is certainly a step in the right direction to a big issue across our patch,” Mr Broad said.

“I have had local farmers and growers in my office, and out on their properties begging for changes to these visas for quite some time for the livelihood of their businesses, and I’ve taken those concerns to the parliament. It is great to see we are making progress in this area.”

Changes to the WHM Visa include increasing the age limit from 30 to 35, and increasing the number of visa holders and allowing them to extend their stay in Australia provided they are undertaking agricultural work in new areas across the country. WHM Visa holders will also be able to extend their period of work with a single agricultural employer from 6 to 12 months.

Under the Seasonal Worker Programme, workers will be able to extend their period of work from 6 to 9 months and will also keep more money with additional changes to out of pocket costs such as travel.

“It is vital that our local fruit is picked, and that we have the work-force to be able to do that. Ideally, I want to see Australians filling Australian jobs, but where this is not possible we must have a working solution,” Mr Broad said.

“Every day in our patch farmers and growers are struggling, these measures are a great start to supporting our locals who are feeling the wrath of the labour work-force shortage.”

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Mr Broad has also welcomed the \$1.5 million investment into the Fair Farms Initiative which will ensure workers are treated fairly while they are employed on a farm and in pack houses.

Ends.

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