



26 March 2020

Dear valued Strategic Partners,

We are all grappling with the uncertainty of the ongoing and developing situation with the COVID-19 pandemic. The situation is ever-changing, and AUSVEG is working to ensure the industry is in a position to adapt to changes in the Australian and global environment to mitigate the risks from the continued spread of the virus.

We'd very much like to know what specific concerns you have and what your messages to Governments are: if we can amplify your messages, and where they are in the interests of growers, we would be very happy to do so.

AUSVEG will continue to operate as normal with minimal disruptions and the staff are available to talk to you and help. The AUSVEG office can still be reached by phone on 03 9882 0277, and staff can be reached by email and their mobiles.

In recent days, AUSVEG has been actively working with governments and industry to ensure critical issues that growers and the supply chain are currently facing are immediately addressed, including:

Supply Chain

- AUSVEG has been calling on State Governments to publicly classify the agriculture sector and the supply chain as essential services to ensure produce and other vital agricultural services can be transported across state borders.
- 'Related industries' includes: transport; seed, fertilisers, packaging equipment; open ports for ease of import and export; prioritised movement of skilled employees through lockdowns; access to appropriate safety procedures, processes and responses; and vital equipment.
- Federal Agriculture Minister David Littleproud has publicly stated that agriculture – food production and supply – is an essential service and has guaranteed maintenance of food production, access to workers, agricultural supply lines, transportation and logistics (media release attached).

Labour

- AUSVEG has been working with the NFF Horticulture Council and the Australian Fresh Produce Alliance for the government to extend visa arrangements for workers already in Australia (seasonal workers and backpackers) so that they can stay on farms – we have called this out publicly and also through representations directly with the government and shadow cabinet.
- We have been working to identify the worker shortage that would result from the prohibition of foreign workers coming into Australia and mapping out where a local workforce would be needed to inform policy formation.
- We are involved in discussions with the NFF, Fair Work Ombudsman and the wider industry around the Horticulture Award during this emergency time to allow workers to work longer on farms – to the benefit of both workers and growers.



AUSVEG has also been actively engaging with a range of other stakeholders on these issues, including:

- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Department of Agriculture
- Department of Employment
- Federal Members of Parliament and their offices
- Fair Work Ombudsman
- National Farmers Federation, including the National Farmers Federation Horticulture Council
- Horticulture industry representative bodies

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to call any of the AUSVEG team on 03 9882 0277, or email info@ausveg.com.au.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Whiteside". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

James Whiteside

Chief Executive Officer