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TASMANIAN GOVERNMENT MEDIA RELEASE

Guy Barnett, Minister for Primary Industries & Water
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Tasmania's seasonal workforce to be bolstered with appropriate safeguards

The Tasmanian Government recognises the importance of our agriculture industry, and we're working closely with growers and industry groups to promote seasonal work opportunities and to ensure Tasmania attracts and retains harvest workers.

We have prioritised local jobs this year and it's pleasing to note that industry is aiming to double the number of local workers this year from around 3000 last year, to more than 6000, which if realised would be a fantastic effort.

While we believe that Tasmanians will help us fill this gap, we have also formally opted into the Federal Government's restart of the Seasonal Worker Programme and we have been actively working with industry and Public Health to determine a safe pathway for these workers to enter Tasmania under stringent COVID safety conditions.

The first flight carrying around 150 seasonal workers is due to arrive in Hobart tonight from Timor Leste, before they enter 14 days mandatory hotel quarantine.

These workers have been subject to a stringent approvals process at both a state and federal level, through the Australian Government's restart of the Seasonal Worker Programme and Pacific Labour Scheme and we are taking every precaution.

Before departing Timor-Leste, all the workers will have undergone a comprehensive health check, and were required to return a negative COVID-19 test before flying. When they arrive in Tasmania this evening, further health screening will be conducted by Health representatives.

The quarantine hotel will be used exclusively for this cohort, and each person will be tested twice during their stay for COVID-19.

If any of the workers return a positive COVID-19 test during their quarantine period, they will be safely transported by Ambulance Tasmania into a separate health facility. The Department of Health has retained the Fountainside Hotel as a dedicated facility for COVID positive patients (not requiring hospital care) to ensure cases remain isolated and our community is protected. The Royal Hobart Hospital is also prepared and ready to safely treat COVID positive patients requiring hospital-level care.

Each worker will need to return a negative COVID-19 test result before joining the local workforce in

harvest, packing and processing roles.

The Tasmanian Government is absolutely committed to supporting our agricultural industry, as a significant contributor to our economy and way of life, but I want to reassure Tasmanians that the health, safety and wellbeing of our community remains the Governments number one priority.