



19 March 2020

Guy Barnett, Minister for Primary Industries and Water

## **National meeting of Agriculture Ministers to address COVID-19**

Agriculture is enormously important to Tasmanian businesses and mainland food security, with three quarters of what we produce exported across Bass Strait.

The Tasmanian majority Liberal Government is taking action to safeguard our vital agricultural markets as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to unfold.

Today Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers met via teleconference to discuss the issues impacting the agriculture sector in light of COVID-19.

We are monitoring the situation closely and our farmers and primary producers can rest assured we are acting in the state's best interests at all times.

Ships will continue to carry freight to and from mainland Australia, allowing local businesses to continue to operate and employ Tasmanians.

Ministers identified a range of challenges for the sector including the reliability of labour supply, with discussions well advanced on options to provide more flexibility in visa arrangements for those employed in agriculture, particularly fruit picking.

Ministers noted jurisdictions are working closely with the major supermarket chains to overcome obstacles in supply chains, such as restrictions on trucking movements.

I was also pleased to discuss the Federal Government's stimulus package and how it can best support the agriculture sector and businesses more generally in these difficult times.

All Ministers agreed that Australia's food supply chain remains strong and that Australians should avoid panic purchases.

Ministers agreed to meet again next week and regularly thereafter to track progress in overcoming obstacles facing the agriculture sector.