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Chair
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Chair,

RE: Submission to the Inquiry into the Working Holiday Maker Program

As a Peak Industry Body in horticulture we write regarding the inquiry by the Joint Standing Committee on Migration into the Working Holiday Maker (WHM) Program.

The Table Grape industry has experienced substantial growth over the past few years and is a very labor-intensive industry with very little automation taken place due to the nature of the industry. Sourcing productive labour in the table grape industry is a significant challenge with the industry relying on temporary and seasonal migrant workers to harvest our crops. Historically, it has been difficult to attract and retain a local workforce for the industry, this has been attributed to a number of factors surrounding the nature of the work and the regional location of our major growing areas. These factors have a significant impact on the availability, quality, and retention of a highly productive workforce.

The WHM program accounts for the majority, approximately 80%, of the Table Grape industry's harvest labour workforce. These workers are important in allowing the industry to manage significant workforce spikes during the peak of our harvest and access to a large number of workers that are inherently mobile (i.e. do not have fixed addresses within Australia) and are therefore able to travel to regional Australia to perform work associated with their visa conditions.

There are increasing numbers of skilled roles in the Table Grape Industry filled by Australians. These skilled roles must be underpinned by reliable seasonal harvest labour sources which to date have included predominantly WHMs, Seasonal Worker Program and Pacific Labour Facility workers. Indeed, every permanent job performed by an Australian citizen or permanent resident in the table grape industry is dependent on these harvest roles, usually performed by visa holders.

The Australian Table Grape industry continues to rely upon the WHM program due to the challenges associated with attracting a large and mobile workforce to regional and rural Australia. Ongoing use of the program will be vital to the capacity of table grape growers to continue employing Australians, have a positive economic and social impact on regional economies and provide all Australians with fresh table grapes.

Yours Sincerely,



Jeff Scott
Chief Executive Officer
Australian Table Grape Association