



MOSSMONT NURSERIES PTY LTD.

A.C.N. 004 435 947

A.B.N. 46 004 435 947

OFFICE/NURSERY:

PO BOX 1683, Griffith, N.S.W. 2680

Shed: (02) 6963 4562

Fax: (02) 69648735

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My full name is Jonathan Richard MOSS. The business that I am involved in is named Mossmont Nursery PTY LTD. The business was established in 1853 and has been operating for 160 years within my family. I am the sixth generation to be involved in the Nursery.

As a business Mossmont grows stone fruit and almond trees on a whole sale level in the Riverina town of Griffith, New South Wales. Our customers span right across Australia servicing some of the major food bowls of this country including Shepparton Victoria, Swan Hill Victoria, Renmark South Australia, Cobram Victoria to name a few.

The town of Griffith, New South Wales is a one of the larger horticultural regions in the Riverina area. As a town the use of seasonal workers is highly important as it supplements the labour shortage which is unable to be filled by local Australian employment.

Due to the shortage of Australian labour, as a company we predominately fill the gap by employing backpackers from both Europe and Asia over approximately ten months of the year. The roles which seasonal workers conduct is extremely important, as the stone fruit industry is very labour intensive with Mossmont Nurseries being of no exception.

The major problem with the industry is that we are forced to employ and train unskilled workers to conduct tasks throughout the season. As we employ backpackers they usually work with our company on average a month or two at best. On many other occasions backpackers have been known to last at the Nursery for just a few days. Backpackers are extremely unreliable and from experience care little for the work. Every time a backpacker moves on, it cost the company as we have to retrain and reskill the next worker who may only work for a short period of time.

Mossmont Nurseries has also in the past seek employment from countries such as Fiji, Tonga and Samoa. Unfortunately this proved to be unsuccessful as confrontation between employees were common. Reliability of employees from these countries was also an issue.

It is of my wish that the Seasonal Workers Programme be extended to other countries particularly in the Asian region such as Indonesia, Malaysia and the Philipppians to name a few. It would be my hope that the industry in the future would have the ability to employ workers from these regions on a six month seasonal basis. This would enable the industry to employ workers for a longer periods of time giving them the necessary training and skill needed to conduct the work.

If the seasonal workers program was to be extended to include further countries this would not impact the Australian work force in the stone fruit industry. From experience in the town of Griffith finding Australian employment has come with some challenges as we are forced to compete with the large wineries for local workers. It is also of my knowledge that other businesses within the stone fruit industry outside the Riverina area are also having similar issues obtaining Australian employment.

Australia has a responsibility to support and develop our neighbouring countries especially within the Asian region to whom we provide foreign aid. The merits of employing people from countries of high unemployment are large. Not only will these foreign workers be assisting the horticulture industry with much needed more permanent staff, they will also be earning the Australian award wages which will help them better educate their families and greatly improve the standard of living.

For quite some time I have been discussing the merits referred to above with other employers in the stone fruit industry. Why should this industry be constantly battling to locate skilled workers when there are a number of countries with citizens who would love the opportunity to work in Australia on a seasonal basis?

I am greatly excited that the Australian government is having an inquiry into this current issue which would very much assist my family business in the future. I am interested in stating my point of view in person and can be contacted anytime on my private phone number.

I look forward with interest on further development relating to the Seasonal Worker Program.

Kind regards,

Jonathan MOSS.