



**Gavin Pearce MP**  
Federal Member for Braddon

## **Media Release**

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### **New data shows farmers will walk away if worker access is further eroded**

New data from the National Farmers' Federation has revealed farmers are threatening to change what they grow or even walk away from farming if their access to overseas workers is further eroded.

With recent visa fee rising and changes to the UK backpacker rules loom over the industry, a recent survey of farmers from nearly every commodity across the country indicates that farmers are abandoning the Pacific Australian Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme.

Federal member for Braddon, Gavin Pearce MP said agriculture is an essential industry, providing food for more than 80 million people worldwide; that's why it's crucial we understand the struggles of farmers, which have only been exacerbated under this Albanese Labor Government.

"At a time when this nation is facing the worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation, the Albanese Labor government's attack on agriculture is inconceivable," Mr Pearce said.

NFF President David Jochinke said the Federal Government's panacea to agriculture's workforce woes, the PALM Scheme, appears to be faltering, with Department of Employment and Work Relations data showing an 11 per cent fall in the number of PALM workers employed in agriculture in the six months to January.

"With the Government piling on red tape to access the PALM Scheme, farmers are turning to other sources for workers, making backpackers an even more critical part of the agricultural workforce than ever before," Mr Jochinke said.

"More than half of farmers surveyed said they would consider switching commodities or leaving the industry altogether if access to workers was reduced."

### **What the survey asked:**

Approximately what percentage of your workforce are backpackers?

- Average response: 33.37%
- Median response: 25%

What impact will the phase-out of UK backpackers have on your business (0-10 scale)?

- Catastrophic (8-10): 40%
- Significant (5-7): 32%
- Minor (1-4): 16%
- Nil (0): 12%

What impact would removal of the '88 day' work incentive have on your business (0-10 scale)?

- Catastrophic (8-10): 63%
- Significant (5-7): 20%
- Minor (1-4): 9%
- Nil (0): 9%

Would you consider changing commodities or leaving the industry if access to workers was reduced?

- Yes: 54%
- No: 46%

**ENDS**