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Greenlife urges Government to maintain working holiday maker scheme

The Australian nursery industry has called on the government to clarify its ongoing support for the working holiday makers (WHM) program, saying it fills gaps that local employment cannot.

Greenlife CEO Sean Cole said proposed government reforms were concerning, particularly for large-scale nursery businesses across Australia that employ large numbers of WHMs, especially during spring to meet labour shortfalls.

Mr Cole said Greenlife supports todays call by 24 peak industry bodies - led by the NFF - to seek clarity and further consultation over the government's proposed reforms to the program.

"Without WHM's our industry would cease to function. We are strong supporters of local labour, but the simple facts are that when it is not available, we need access to labour that can help us to efficiently and effectively meet our seasonal peaks."

Mr Cole said experience has shown that the arrangements work well for both the employer and the WHM's. "As employers we have always ensured that all work is undertaken in a way that is compliant with Australian workplace laws and employment standards."

"From an employee perspective, many of the nurseries operate in attractive locations for travel and tourism, providing industry with a viable workforce and driving increased spending in the local economy."

Mr Cole said the growing public pressure on immigration should not be used as an excuse to cut back on the WHM scheme.

"We have a scheme that is working well, and rather than any cuts to visa numbers, we need government support to ensure it continues to operate effectively and support the Australian nursery industry."

Ends

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