

BRIEFING NOTES FOR National RDA Regional Updates Teleconference 25/11/2020

To: The Hon Nola Marino MP and DITRDC
From: RDA Murray, NSW
Submitted by: Edwina Hayes – Director Regional Development and CEO, RDA Murray
Information Source: RDA Murray Network
Date: 25 November 2020

RDA Murray November 2020 Survey Results (Summary at Appendix 1.) demonstrate Murray NSW Region disadvantage from **border closure**

- 25% of local businesses saw revenue decrease by 40-60%
- 18.75% had suffered losses of 60-100% of revenue
- 60% of local businesses lost up to \$999/week and 13.33% lost up to \$9999/week
- Businesses cited the difficulties of getting staff across the border, the loss of Victorian clients and customers and the stress to staff and customers as major factors

Thankyou Sam and DITRDC for following up the idea that:

Could reducing the tax burden on second jobs encourage more workers into 2 or more casual jobs rather than remaining on JobSeeker?

A person earning \$454pw before tax. (Single, share rent, JobSeeker or 23 hours minimum wage equivalent)

In 1 Job claiming Tax Free Threshold take home = \$434

In 2 jobs 50:50 with second job not claiming TFT take home = \$404

Waiving the additional tax threshold on the second job could put \$30pw more cash into the pockets of casual workers.

RDA Murray FOCUS THIS WEEK:

Supporting Investment proposals that will stimulate Economic Recovery into NSW and AusGov

- Golf on the Murray Prospectus
- Murray Irrigation Infrastructure and Environmental Watering Projects
- Albury City Council Recovery Program
- Albury -Wodonga Regional Deal
- MRT and DRM visitation prospectus (marketing)



RDA Murray November Survey **LOCAL WORKFORCE NEEDS** found

- 76.19% of respondents were small businesses with 1-19 employees
- 76.19% have had difficulty finding suitable staff
- Responding businesses had an average of 4.5 unfilled positions
- 68.75% of respondents say their vacancies are due to a lack of qualified candidates and 62.5% cited a lack of experienced candidates
- As a result of unfilled positions:
 - 82.35% of businesses had suffered decreased productivity
 - 70.59% had an increased workload for available staff
 - 64.71% had a decreased capacity to take on new work
 - 58.82% of owners/managers experienced increased stress

I have found there is a national **piecework pay rate set back in Jan 2020** for at least one Company.

Harvest minimum piecework rates

	Piecework rate 1:	Piecework rate 2:	Piecework rate 3:	Piecework rate 4:
\$ per unit	\$1.00 per kg	\$0.30 per punnet	\$ 0.18 per punnet	\$ 0.19 per punnet
Crop / Work type:	Blueberry Picking	Raspberry Picking	Blackberry Picking	Strawberry Picking
Variable(s)	Weather conditions, ripening process, type of picking, size of plants, density of plants, variety of crop			

Considering the compounding labour force pressures in the seasonal work sector, I encourage **Employers to pull their pay rate lever to attract more workforce.**

The piecework rates of pay are based on FairTrade standard; minimum wages \$19.84ph plus 25% casual loading and 15% piece rate loading for the average picker. Statistically half the pickers are earning less than minimum wages. No wonder they can't attract workers the conditions are very poor.

I assume Producers have future agreements with supermarkets and distributors that mean they will lose profit if they adjust their pay rates. A dilemma for national food security and adaptation to disasters etc.

RDA Murray is meeting with DESE staff to introduce them to Employers and deconstruct the complex barriers to recruitment.

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APPENDIX 1. SUMMARY NOVEMBER 2020 SURVEY RESULTS (N=19)

RDA MURRAY PERFORMANCE

- 94.74% respondents are familiar with the work of RDA Murray
- 73.33% think RDA Murray has worked to support the growth of existing business and the attraction of new businesses to the area
- 75% think RDA Murray has facilitated regional organisations working together to benefit local people

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BORDER CLOSURE IMPACT

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MSEAT

- 79% respondents were pleased with MSEAT's advice and coordination on regional priorities
- 79% felt MSEAT provided a central source of advice for the region
- 85% said MSEAT provided a platform for regionally led initiatives
- 81% believe MSEAT initiated and hosted data and evidence
- 91% felt MSEAT was well administered

