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Bowen Gumlu Growers Association
(BGGA)

Migration Forum Report

Dated - 01 August 23

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Document control

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Disclaimer

In preparing this report, we (DunneMedforth) have relied on information and material supplied by you, the client, and do not take responsibility for the accuracy of the information and material provided.

Executive summary

The agricultural sector in North Queensland plays a pivotal role in the Australian economy, producing a diverse range of commodities. The industry is heavily reliant on seasonal and temporary labour, often sourced through migration due to the seasonal nature of the work and the insufficient local workforce.

On the 13th of July, 2023, the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association (BGGGA) held the Regional Capacity Through Migration Forum. BGGGA and the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network hosted this event, with funding from the Rural Jobs Initiative (RJI) Shared Funding Project.

The event was held in Bowen, Queensland, Australia. The event attracted ~eighty-four physical participants and some ~twenty-five online participants. The event brought together horticultural growers, producers, associated agribusinesses, agribusiness professional services, Peak Tourism Industry bodies (Whitsunday Tourism and Bowen Tourism), industry groups, media and all three layers of Government.

The event was initiated based on the changes, challenges and opportunities facing growers in North Queensland. Post COVID-19 much has changed and there was a compelling need to bring all groups together to share, update and collaborative to advance the social and economic fabric of BGGGA region.

The event explored fundamental topics that impact on the capacity and capability of growers. These topics were:

- The seasonal worker overview (who, what and why),
- Employment opportunities (who, what and why),
- The Backpacker landscape (changes and challenges),
- Skilled migration demand (supply and demand),
- Future-proofing the region's skilled workforce,
- Pacific Islander Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme (with recent changes) and,
- Housing and accommodation.

While the forum explored each area shown above, the prevailing theme centred on the perception that current and planned policy changes related to migration are increasing barriers (thus costs) to market, for growers. While acknowledging that no industry can remain unchanged, improved consultation and communication from policy makers is vital moving forward as highlighted in picture 1.



Picture 1

The forum established that for the region to transform and thrive, greater support is required to deal with the rising business costs and the growing complexity of accessing casual/migrant labour. With a strong desire to adapt and overcome, all stakeholders involved recognised the need to improve communication and collaboration. The forum was a success on many levels, not least to ‘reset’ perceptions in a post COVID world for all stakeholders.

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Key Themes

DunneMedforth makes the following recommendations to the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association (BGGGA) based on the forum.

Number	Recommendation	Priority
R01	Collection of data to measure the impact of the changes over time.	High
R02	Support growers to lower the risk of changes during the PALM scheme transition.	High
R03	Increased awareness for Harvest Trail across all stakeholders, from the supply to demand side to include capturing of skills and credentials.	High
R04	Increased physical events for industry-wide collaboration.	Medium
R05	Create links with the tourism industry related to the backpacker market.	Medium
R06	Creation of a combined Working Holiday Strategy for the BGGGA region.	Medium
R07	Improve communication about the region's working holiday opportunities in the region's agricultural sector with improved collaboration between BGGGA and Harvest Trail.	High
R08	An annual planning forum between the tourism and agricultural sectors to maximise the opportunities for backpackers.	Low
R09	Improve awareness of the Visa tools and programs (DAMA) available to the industry.	Medium
R10	Define a regional industry future skills workforce strategy in conjunction with the ongoing work of Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3).	High
R11	Communicate the public funding opportunities available for capital investments and skills to future-proof the sector.	Medium
R12	Complete regional capacity planning with stakeholders to understand demand and supply well.	High
R13	Communicate about accommodation challenges with social advocacy groups like Greater Whitsunday Communities (GWC).	High
R14	Conduct a lesson learnt process from when the PALM scheme has not worked or has faced issues. Compare lessons from other jurisdictions, domestically and international (New Zealand). How can pastoral Care improve to mitigate the challenges.	Medium
R15	Ongoing collaboration with the Queensland Government to communicate and promote accommodation mitigation strategies such as the Rural Workers Accommodation Initiative.	Medium

Business Context

The Bowen Gumlu Growers Association (BGGGA)¹ is a regional industry body representing the interests of its members, horticultural growers, producers and associated agribusinesses in North Queensland, Australia. BGGGA's key activities include member services, advocacy, workforce and industry development and the delivery of projects focused on improving on-farm practices, commercial outcomes for farming businesses and the prosperity of our regional community.

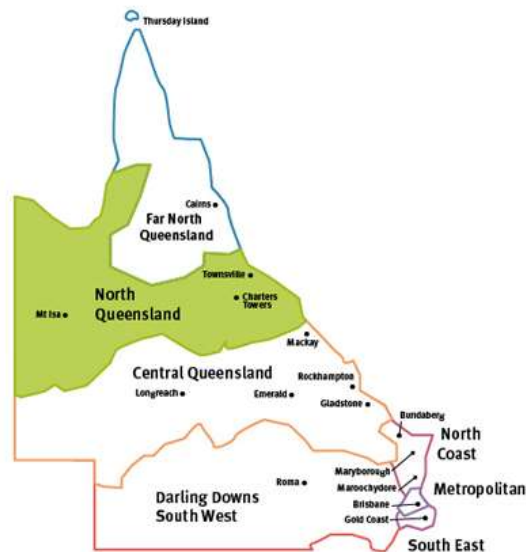
The region is the largest producer of winter vegetable crops in Queensland, generating farm gate production worth approximately \$650m per annum.

Essential commodities include tomato, capsicum, mangoes, cucurbits, beans, and corn.

The BGGGA growers employ approximately 1,500 workers yearly and an additional 2,000 during the harvest season, the subject of this forum. The sector supports one in every five workers living on the East Coast of the North Queensland region. The BGGGA members' product feeds the nation and export to more than a dozen countries.

North Queensland

Regarding North Queensland, the following maps represent a contemporary view of the region. The Focus of BGGGA is mainly in the eastern area of North Queensland, with agricultural land with a high growing yield based on climactic conditions.



¹ [Home - Bowen Gumlu Growers Association](#)

Migration Forum.

Overview

On the 13th of July, 2023, the Bowen Gumlu Growers Association (BGGGA) held the Regional Capacity Through Migration Forum. BGGGA and the Queensland Agriculture Workforce Network hosted this event, with funding from the Rural Jobs Initiative (RJI) Shared Funding Project.

The Queensland Government, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries directly supported this event². In addition, the private sponsor of Raboank³ also supported this event, given their strong links to the region and agriculture.

The event was held in Bowen, Queensland, Australia. The event attracted ~eighty-four physical participants and some ~twenty-five online participants. The event brought together horticultural growers, producers, associated agribusinesses, agribusiness professional services, Peak Tourism Industry bodies (Whitsunday Tourism and Bowen Tourism), industry groups, media and all three layers of Government.

The entire event agenda can be found in Appendix A of this document.

Event Purpose:

The forum was developed over the prior twelve months with the support and assistance of various stakeholders and groups. The primary focus of the forum was threefold:

1. For BGGGA to provide regional collaborative leadership to address industry labour challenges within the current economic climate of a 'talent shortage'.
2. To share, communicate and collaborate on existing migrant mechanisms, the positive and negative.
3. To explore migrant workforce options and opportunities in support of regional social and economic growth of agribusiness.

² [Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Queensland | Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Queensland \(daf.qld.gov.au\)](https://daf.qld.gov.au)

³ [Rabobank AU | Rural Bank & Agribusiness Farm Finance](https://www.rabobank.com.au)

Setting the scene.

Overview

The context of the forum was defined through the introductions of BGGGA CEO, Ry Collins and briefings from Hon. Mark Furner, Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities.

It was widely recognised the Queensland Agriculture Industry continues to evolve. The industry is seeking ways to increase productivity while lowering costs. Through a combination of significant events from the COVID-19 Pandemic, changes in market demand, international market fluctuations, and a global workforce disruption, the Queensland Agriculture Industry continues to evolve and perform.

The forum acknowledged that the following eight items (listed below) also play a vital role in industry progress in addition to labour and skills shortages. While not explicitly discussed in detail, it is broadly understood these are forces acting upon the industry and, thus, play a role in migration.

1. **Technological Advancements:** The agriculture industry in Queensland continues to embrace and integrate advanced technologies like precision farming, Internet of Things (IoT) devices, drones, and artificial intelligence.
2. **Climate Adaptation Measures:** The Queensland agriculture sector is working towards resilience and sustainability in response to ongoing climate change challenges. Farmers are adopting climate-smart practices, including crop diversification, drought-resistant varieties, and water conservation methods with the support of BGGGA.
3. **Sustainable Practices:** Environmental consciousness has become a prominent theme globally. BGGGA growers are implementing sustainable farming practices, such as reduced chemical usage, organic farming, and regenerative agriculture, to protect natural resources and maintain soil health. This is highly relevant in the Reef Catchment areas of the East Coast of North Queensland.
4. **Value-Added Products:** Producers have been exploring opportunities to create value-added products (Bio Futures⁴) from their raw materials, aiming to capture a larger market share.
5. **Biosecurity and Disease Management:** The industry has remained vigilant in managing biosecurity risks and mitigating the spread of diseases that can threaten crops.
6. **Export Opportunities:** Queensland's agriculture industry has seen continued growth in export opportunities, driven by increasing demand for high-quality produce in international markets. The state's reputation for clean and safe food production is pivotal in accessing these markets.
7. **Agri-Tourism:** The trend of Agri-tourism has gained some traction in North Queensland, with farmers diversifying their revenue streams by offering on-farm experiences to tourists.

⁴ [Workforces of the Future — Greater Whitsunday Alliance](#)

- 8. Government Support: The Queensland government is committed to supporting the agriculture sector through funding programs - Growing for Queensland⁵.

Immediate Challenges

The forum understood that various immediate factors are challenging the sector; the BGGGA summarised these in the following graphic. Each picture highlights a stakeholder, policy or program relevant to the cohort attending the Migration Forum.



⁵ [Growing for Queensland | Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Queensland \(daf.qld.gov.au\)](http://daf.qld.gov.au)

The seasonal worker journey, experience, and future.

Overview

Seasonal workers play a vital part in the economy within the BGGGA area. The seasonal workers contribute to various farming activities, such as harvesting crops and/or tending to livestock. This work demands physical endurance and adaptability to different weather conditions, but it also offers a sense of satisfaction for many. The forum agreed there are three distinct types of seasonal workers:

1. Locals and interstate Australians.
2. Backpackers on Working Holiday Maker visa.
3. Pacific and Timor-Leste workers, through the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme.

Several important themes emerged from this part of the forum through a panel session and digital collaboration. These themes were:

1. Concern that the Pacific Labour Facility (PLS) Deeds of Agreement will impact the program moving forward.
2. Diversity of the seasonal workforce over the next ten years?
3. How PALM employers will guarantee 30 hours per week, and what impact the changes will have on the decision to employ PALM workers or backpackers.
4. The current lack of work for backpackers, and the challenges of the region getting bypassed through this reputation.
5. The impact of the PALM scheme changes to those in Pacific and Timor-Leste countries.
6. The need for genuine ongoing industry collaboration is vital moving forward.

The combined responses are displayed as a word cloud image below. The cloud shows the most frequent words from the participants; individual responses are provided in a CSV file to BGGGA.

Picking, Packing, Pruning and Planting our Nation's Produce.

Overview

The forum was provided with a presentation by Harvest Trail⁶. Harvest Trail is an Australian Government initiative that was developed to address labour shortages faced by farmers and growers, especially during busy harvest times when crops need to be harvested quickly and efficiently. Harvest Trail provided an overview of its capability and how this can be accessed. They highlighted several key features of their capability to the forum, this included:

1. Job Matching: The Harvest Trail operates through an online platform and physical Job active offices where job seekers can register their interest in agricultural work. Employers also list their labour requirements, allowing for effective job matching. This is highlighted in the diagram below, a slide from the presentation.

Harvest Trail Service
 Job placement Service across 16 Harvest regions in Australia
 In Queensland : 4 Harvest Regions

- Far North Queensland: Q.I.T.E
- Wide Bay: MADEC
- Sunshine Moreton: MADEC
- Southern Queensland: BEST Employment

Harvest Trail Information Service
 1800 062 332
www.harvesttrail.gov.au

Harvest Areas 2020-23

Map labels: Top End, Far North Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Moreton, Southern Queensland, Northern NSW Coast, Hunter/Central West, Riverina, Southern Valley, Tasmania, Gippsland, Mid Murray, South Australia-South East, Adelaide-Barossa, South West Western Australia, Sarralyia.

1800 062 332
www.harvesttrail.gov.au
 madec

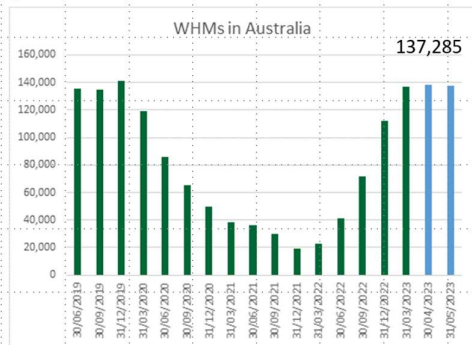
2. Seasonal Opportunities: The Harvest Trail jobs platform work is predominantly seasonal, ranging from fruit and vegetable picking to packing and other farm-related tasks. These opportunities usually arise during peak harvest times and vary across different regions of Australia.

⁶ [Harvest Trail Services - Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Australian Government \(dewr.gov.au\)](https://www.dewr.gov.au)

3. Domestic and International Workers: The Harvest Trail program is open to Australian residents and temporary visa holders, including backpackers, students, and other visa subclasses eligible for seasonal work. The current visa holder data is highlighted in the diagram below; this was presented at the forum.

Itinerant Visa Holders— A Snapshot

Country	31/05/2023
UK	24605
France	15987
Ireland	15203
Italy	9789
Taiwan	9649
South Korea	9581
Japan	8361
Germany	7205
Indonesia	4243
Argentina	3687



Visa changes and shifts in sector preference for work

Student Visas

UK Visa holders



1800 062 332

www.harvesttrail.gov.au



4. Regional and Remote Work: Most of the work offered through the Harvest Trail is in regional and remote areas where agricultural activities are prevalent.
5. Labour Shortage Mitigation: Harvest Trail is vital in mitigating labour shortages that could otherwise impact agricultural production and food security in Australia, by facilitating access to a willing and capable workforce.

Analysis

The Harvest Trail team provided their insights across two areas:

1. Challenges facing the itinerant agricultural workforce:
 - a. The lower availability of available hostels/accommodation post-COVID-19.
 - b. Access to transportation to remote locations for agricultural work.
 - c. Navigating the post-COVID labour market within Australia.

2. Challenges for the industry:
 - a. Enquiries for work in agriculture are growing.
 - b. Matters of biosecurity and compliance issues concern many.
 - c. Negative feedback (word of mouth) from other travellers in their home country is a challenge.

The overall perspective of Harvest Trail was positive. The forum identified that the industry can grow and improve opportunities through communication and collaboration. The Harvest Trail program is a crucial capability moving forward, and more is needed to plan, attract and retain itinerant agricultural workers.

Recommendations

R3 – Increased awareness for Harvest Trail across all stakeholders, from the supply to demand side to include capturing of skills and credentials.

R4 – Increased physical events for industry-wide collaboration.

R5 – Create stronger links with the tourism industry related to the backpacker market.⁷

⁷ BGGGA has worked in close collaboration with Harvest Trail to access and analyse data to inform the geographic and demographics targets for the Pick Paradise Social Media Attraction Campaign. BGGGA also worked with NQ Harvest Trail staff to pre-populate jobs on the Pick Paradise Platform to attract WHMs to the region to address seasonal workforce shortages.

Our Changing Backpacker Landscape:

Overview

A panel session was conducted with several key stakeholders to explore the backpacker landscape. The backpacker economy in Queensland has traditionally been a significant and dynamic component of the region's tourism and labour sector.

The group discussed the following aspects of the Backpacker Landscape:

1. Working Holiday Visa: The Australian Government offers working holiday visas (subclass 417 and 462) to young travellers aged 18 to 30 (or 35 for certain nationalities). These visas allow them to work and travel in Australia for up to 12 or 24 months, depending on their nationality. Several changes have occurred, which confused many.
2. Seasonal Work: Backpackers are primarily exploring; many need extra income to support their adventures. Backpackers come to Australia as it is known to have casual, seasonal work. Agriculture, including fruit picking, harvesting, and other farm-related activities, is widespread, especially in rural and regional areas.
3. Economic Impact: The backpacker economy has made (pre COVID) a significant contribution to the region. Backpackers spend money on accommodation, food, transportation, tours, and leisure activities, supporting local businesses and creating jobs in the process.
4. Rural Fabric: Backpackers are an essential part of Australia's agricultural workforce. They are an immense economic benefit for farming industries, while contributing to the social and cultural liveliness of regional places.⁸
5. Word of Mouth: Backpackers often return to their home countries with unforgettable memories, life-changing experiences, and lasting connections. They become ambassadors for the region and often share their positive experiences, encouraging others to visit the country.

Several vital themes grew from this part of the forum through a panel session and digital collaboration. These themes were:

1. Limited jobs are available for backpackers in the region; an example cited is that Harvest Trail has two positions available for the BGGGA region and two thousand jobs in Southern Queensland.
2. The region must regain its 'destination of choice' for Working Holiday Makers.

⁸ [Turbulent Times: The State of Backpacking and Seasonal Farm Work in Australia \(griffith.edu.au\)](https://www.griffith.edu.au/turbulent-times-the-state-of-backpacking-and-seasonal-farm-work-in-australia)

3. It was stated that backpackers prefer hospitality work over agricultural work.
4. There is an oversupply of under-skilled and yet a shortage of skilled workers. With the advancement of technology in the sector, more (seasonal) skilled workers will be required.
5. It was stated that backpackers are not reliable.

Analysis

The conversation stimulated significant discussion, and it is clear that the working holiday maker (WHM - backpacker) is an integral part of the region's economy. The overall forum was highly positive about WHM, and more focus should be given post COVID to this group. It was again acknowledged that stronger links between agriculture and tourism sector must be forged. Finally, a new emphasis should be placed on the itinerate skilled workers that are required in the future years across all commodities.

Recommendations

R6 – Creation of a combined Working Holiday Strategy for the BGGGA region.

R7 – Improve communication about the region's working holiday opportunities in the region's agricultural sector with improved collaboration between BGGGA and Harvest Trail.

R8 – An annual planning forum between the tourism and agricultural sectors to maximise opportunities for backpackers.

Demystifying Skilled Migration

Overview

A comprehensive and engaging presentation was delivered by the Department of Home Affairs⁹ and the Greater Whitsunday, Regional Development Australia¹⁰. The presentation covered two crucial areas for the migration forum, providing valuable updates and insights. These are summarised below:

1. Department of Home Affairs, Visa Options:
 - a. Business, Industry and Regional Outreach (BIRO).
 - b. Program Updates.
 - c. Visa Processing Time Frames and Pathways.
 - d. What is Regional?
 - e. Visa Options.
 - f. Labour Agreements.
 - g. Visa Information and Verification Online (VEVO)

2. Regional Development Australia, Designated Area Migration Agreements (DAMA). A DAMA is an agreement (5-year) between the Commonwealth and a state/territory or regional body that provides:
 - a. A flexible, tailored response to a designated region's local unique economic and labour market needs and conditions.
 - b. Solutions for Australian businesses where there are skills gaps and shortages that can't be met by the Australian market.
 - c. Access to a broader range of overseas workers than available through the standard skilled visa programs.
 - d. Various negotiable concessions to the standard skilled visa requirements; and
 - e. Pathways to permanent residence as a major incentive to attract and retain overseas workers.
 - f. There are currently 12 DAMAs in place in Australia. For information on where and how they operate, as well as detailed information on DAMA's, please visit the Department of Home Affairs website – see link [Designated Area Migration Agreements \(DAMA\) \(homeaffairs.gov.au\)](https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/working-in-australia/designated-area-migration-agreements-dama)

⁹ [Department of Home Affairs](https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au)

¹⁰ [Greater Whitsundays | Regional Development Australia \(rda.gov.au\)](https://www.rda.gov.au)

Analysis

The two presentations contained a range of detailed insights relating to visas, skills, and regions. The presentations are factual in content and can be provided on request. The presentations demonstrated the critical enabler for a migrant workforce.

Recommendations

R9 – Improve awareness of the Visa tools and programs (DAMA) available to the industry.

Future-proofing our skilled workforce.

Overview

A panel session was brought together to examine the skills required to ensure regional growth of the agricultural sector. The conversation stimulated an insightful discussion that all participants agreed provided guidance on planning for this vital area.

It was agreed that some level of 'future-proofing' the region's agricultural workforce is essential to ensure sustainability and resilience. As highlighted earlier in this document (Setting the Scene), the agriculture industry faces evolving challenges, such as climate change, technological advancements, and changing consumer demands/expectations. The panel and audience members engaged in a fruitful conversation that covered the following areas:

1. **Education and Training:** Upskilling through vocational and tertiary education. Investments should be made in education and training programs that equip individuals with modern agricultural practices. A notable example was highlighted: those with a Heavy Ridged Vehicle licence in Sugar Cane areas are attracted to work in mining with improved remuneration and better conditions.
2. **Digital Technology:** Embrace and integrate technology into agricultural practices to improve efficiency and productivity.
3. **Attracting to the region and retaining talent:** Make the regional agriculture sector an attractive career choice by promoting its significance and highlighting opportunities for professional growth with a lifestyle balance.
4. **Sustainable Practices:** Promoting sustainable farming practices that address environmental concerns. These sustainable practices include training workers on conservation techniques, resource management, and reducing the industry's carbon footprint.
5. **Collaboration:** Improved collaboration was widely recognised as the best way to future-proof the region's sector. The knowledge and insights provided by the forum were compelling for everyone involved.
6. **Promotion and Perception:** Raise awareness domestically and internationally about the region's agriculture industry and its diverse career opportunities.

Analysis

The coming years will change the region's agricultural sector, and change must occur for all stakeholders to remain competitive. Many presenters emphasised the need not to repeat what worked pre-COVID. The region's agricultural industry will continue to face pressure to improve productivity and quality while lowering costs.

Recommendations

R10 – Define a regional industry future skills workforce strategy in conjunction with the ongoing work of Greater Whitsunday Alliance (GW3)^{11 12}

R11 – Communicate the public funding opportunities available for capital investments and skills to future-proof the sector. To include how training opportunities could be expanded to those currently ineligible.¹³

¹¹ [Education — Greater Whitsunday Alliance](#)

¹² [Agriculture and Aquaculture — Greater Whitsunday Alliance](#)

¹³ [Growing for Queensland | Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, Queensland \(daf.qld.gov.au\)](#)

Expanding the Pacific Islander Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme

Overview

A panel session was brought together to examine the expansion of the Pacific Islander Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme within the region. The conversation covered a range of areas that are captured below as the essential items:

1. The PALM scheme is well regarded within the region.
2. The PALM scheme is seen as a form of foreign aid, with many growers taking great pride in helping families in the native country of the PALM workers.
3. The PALM scheme has been highly successful, and its expansion is welcomed.
4. Legislation changes have not been well communicated and will impact the PALM scheme on many levels.
5. The scheme created industry resilience during a difficult time (COVID-19), and many remain grateful to the PALM workers.
6. The scheme must be balanced with the Working Holiday Makers and domestic workers. The region must be open to business for everyone.
7. Pastoral Care is vital for the PALM scheme to work. Growers and labour hire providers must not underestimate how important this element is to ensure a positive outcome for all parties.
8. Future conversations about PALM must be broader to capture Queensland Police Service and other public safety stakeholders.
9. Accommodation remains a genuine issue. This ranges from lack of accommodation to those exploiting the situation by overcrowding accommodation.

Analysis

The PALM scheme is an essential program for the North Queensland Region. All stakeholders spoke positively about the program, with only minor issues relating to behaviour and overstays. There is a clear need for a capacity plan to ensure that skilled workers, domestic workers, Working Holiday Makers and PALM scheme workers all have a place they can call home locally.

Recommendation

R12 – Complete regional capacity planning with stakeholders to understand demand and supply well.

R13 – Communicate about accommodation challenges with social advocacy groups like Greater Whitsunday Communities (GWC)¹⁴.

R14 – Conduct a lesson learnt process from when the PALM scheme has not worked or has faced issues. Compare lessons from other jurisdictions, domestically and international (New Zealand). How can pastoral Care improve to mitigate the challenges.

¹⁴ [Greater Whitsunday Communities](#)

Home for Everybody

Overview

The Queensland Government, Department of Agriculture and Fisheries provided a presentation about the agricultural accommodation challenges. The presentation gave a detailed and pragmatic overview of the Rural Workers Accommodation Initiative¹⁵. This Queensland Government scheme directly addresses the lack of rural worker accommodation in regional towns to support harvest work and food processing.

The Rural Workers' Accommodation Initiative aims to reduce barriers by eliminating development approvals via an amendment to the Planning Regulation. The primary focus is threefold:

1. To integrate on-farm accommodation into the business for farmers to secure a workforce when possible.
2. To provide a consistent statewide approach in planning schemes across local governments to on-farm accommodation.
3. To provide small-scale on-farm accommodation for workers to relieve pressure on regional towns.

The Rural Workers' Accommodation Initiative is supported by the Queensland Rural and Industry Development Authority (QRIDA). Through QRIDA, they can provide loans for primary producers.

The presentation is available on request as it provides essential details about the initiative.

Analysis

The accommodation challenges are not unique to the BGGGA region. Many stakeholder groups are seeking to understand what other strategies can be put in place to improve this vital subject. The BGGGA is currently collaborating with Greater Whitsunday Communities (GWC)¹⁶ to define a region-based approach.

Recommendation

R15 - Ongoing collaboration with the Queensland Government to communicate and promote accommodation mitigation strategies such as the Rural Workers Accommodation Initiative.

¹⁵ [Queensland Rural Workers' Accommodation Initiative | Planning \(statedevelopment.qld.gov.au\)](#)

¹⁶ [Greater Whitsunday Communities](#)

Appendix A – Forum Agenda

Regional Capacity Through Migration Forum - Agenda		
Date: 13th July 2023	Venue: Flagstaff Hill Bowen	Time: 10am – 4pm (Networking form 4pm – 5pm)
Time	Topic	Keynote Speakers and Panellists
10am	Welcome <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Welcome to Country and Blessing - Official Welcome 	Uncle Jim Gaston Reverend Paul Talakap Ry Collins (Bowen Gumlu Growers Association)
10:10am	Growing Workforce, Growing Agriculture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the future of Agriculture in Australia? 	Hon Mark Furner (Minister for Agriculture Industry Development & Fisheries and Minister for Rural Communities)
10:15am	Your Journey, Your Experience <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sharing the experience and the sense of belonging of our seasonal workforce - Community service support - Attraction opportunities for our region 	Ben Martin (Producer) Nick Thomas (Producer) Dr Kaya Barry (Griffith University) Ati Mamoe (Principal Program Officer) Ricky Mio (Producer) Stephanie Naunton (Unify)
10:45	PALM scheme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Deed and Guidelines 	Steve Burdette (Approved Employers)
10:55am	Break	
11:30am	Picking, Packing Pruning and Planting our Nation's Produce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Current statistics, data, and trends - How are we remaining globally competitive in this market? - Where is Queensland currently placed? 	Kristy Banks (Harvest Trail Information Services)
11:50am	Our Changing Backpacker Landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are we noticing with the Working Holiday Maker (WMH) workforce? - What local initiatives and solutions are available to support producers to attract and retain WHMs? - What are our key learnings from COVID-19 and how can we leverage from these experiences? 	Kristy Banks (Harvest Trail Information Services) Keely Van Wensveen (Harvest Trail) Julie Marshall (Harvest Trail) Jenn Honnery (Pick Paradise) Rick Hamilton (Tourism Whitsundays)
12:20pm	Demystifying Skilled Migration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do we need to know about Skilled Migration? - Designated Area Migration Agreements (DAMAs) 	Marny Bowman (BIRO) Rob Cocco (Regional Development Australia)
12:50pm	Future-proofing our Skilled Workforce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What does our future workforce look like? - What future skills we be required? - How can we future proof our skilled workforce? - What are our skilled workforce options and opportunities? 	Marny Bowman (BIRO) Rob Cocco (Regional Development Australia) Tracey Holmes (Townsville Enterprise) Gill Jurgens (NQ Aerovation) Julia Wheway (TAFE Qld) Steve Harrison (Tassal) Karolina Ferenc (Pacific Centre) Claire Maradani (Treeti)
1:20pm	Break	
2:00pm	Our Island Home <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lived experiences of the Pacific Australia Islander Mobility (PALM) scheme 	Jamie and Melita Jurgens (Producers) Clair North (Pastoral Carer Veejays)
2:20pm	Expanding the Pacific Islander Labour Mobility Scheme <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can producers access the PALM scheme? - What is the process to become an Approved Employer (AE) or to engage a Labour Hire Provider? - What are our future opportunities with the PALM scheme? 	Jamie and Melita Jurgens (Producers) Clair North (Pastoral Carer Veejays) Donna Clay (PLF) Lawrie Brown (Top of the Crop) Paul Keane (Labour Solutions Australia) Donna Moggs (Fair Farms)
3:10pm	Home for Everybody <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rural Worker's Accommodation Initiative and accommodation opportunities 	Colette Williams (DAF) Gary Warrener (Whitsunday Regional Council)
3:30pm	Discussion and Closure	Neil Glentworth (Dunne Medforth)
4:00pm	Presentation and Networking	Frances Besterman (Rabobank)