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Sent: Friday, 31 August 2018 3:57 PM

To: Chambers - Kovacic DP

Cc: alana.pittard@vff.org.au; Michael Crisera; Emma Germano

Subject: OBJECTION NOTICE: Proposed Changes to the Horticulture Award - AM2014/196 and 2017/197 - Casual and Part-Time Employment - Horticulture

RE: AM2014/196 and 2017/197 - Casual and Part-Time Employment – Horticulture

WE OBJECT TO THE IMPOSED CHANGES TO THE HORTICULTURE AWARD.

As a fourth generation family of fruit growers- Silver Orchards- in the Goulburn Valley we strongly object to the changes proposed in the Hort award. Here in Australia we already have the highest wages anywhere in the western world. We have 2x the rate of casual wages of Europe and the USA and Canada. 1.5 time the rate of Casual wages of NZ .

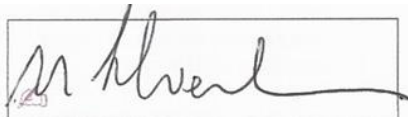
We have a disadvantage already of not being able to export our fruit and vegetables competitively as we have to compete with the world market for our export costs are too high when we have to take into account our high wages which are nowhere near those costs of other countries so we are unable to compare and have a tremendous financial disadvantage already.

We have already 66% of our costs attributed to labour on our orchard and at present the returns on our fruit with major supermarkets such as Coles and Woolworths selling \$1.00/ kilo pears makes us unviable as the cost to produce a kg of pears is closer to \$2.20 a kilo. Apples are also becoming increasingly expensive to produce and we need \$3.50per kilo minimum to cover our costs where they are sold at \$2.50 per kilo and less in the major supermarkets.

The basic costs on an orchard are increasing all the time especially with the new Quality Assurance programs and water costs being so high. We need to have 100% water allocation for our permanent plantings to remain alive and produce a crop- so in cases of low water availability such as the drought we are experiencing now we have to buy extra temporary water to make up the lack due to natures cruel drought circumstances. These constant pressures are everyday and the cost of labour is a major concern to us. We have to source labour from overseas to make up our workforce to covert the seasonal requirements we have with harvesting our crop. We do not work Monday to Friday 9-5 jobs, nor do our workers and we need to have piece rates effective to be able to assist us to pick our crop without restrictions of set work hours. The piece rates are strictly enforced so the fruit pickers are not disadvantaged and in fact they make more working piece rate than they do doing normal casual rates. All over the world workers come here as backpackers to help us pick our crop and to have the luxury of our high wages compared to their own countries.

“Under the proposed changes, growers will need to pay casual employees’ overtime (50 per cent of casual rate) if they work over 304 hours in an eight week period” this is not viable for us as we already make up for the unseasonal conditions that are asked of our casual staff by giving them a higher rate per hour than permanent workers. Our workers do not need to work when it is raining or the sun has set.

WE STONGLY DISSAPPROVE OF THE CHANGES TO HORTICULTURAL AWARD AS ITS BEING SUGGESTED.



Maurice and Rien and Bo Silverstein

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