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For immediate release

## Growers in regional SA hurt by drop in 457 visa approvals

South Australian vegetable growers are struggling to find enough workers to harvest their crops, with the number of 457 skilled migration visa approvals in South Australia dropping by 27.4 per cent from 1 July to 31 December 2015.

The fall in 457 visa approvals is being attributed to the bureaucracy behind the visa's regulations, as South Australian horticultural industries are becoming increasingly reliant on economic migrants that come to the state as a result of initiatives such as the 457 skilled migration visa program, particularly during peak harvesting times.

"The South Australian vegetable industry faces critical local labour shortages during peak seasonal periods, and our growers rely on overseas labour to harvest their crops and prevent crippling losses," said AUSVEG SA State Manager Jordan Brooke-Barnett.

"The drop in the number of 457 visa approvals is very concerning, as it affects regional areas of the state that rely on the contributions of overseas workers to remain economically viable."

AUSVEG SA is the leading body representing the interests of vegetable and potato producers in the state and provides growers with a united voice and strong representation with all levels of government.

"The 457 visa system is a vital scheme for growers to attract skilled workers to Australia to meet regional shortages in skilled occupations," said Mr Brooke-Barnett.

"While South Australian growers' first preference is always to employ local workers, there is simply not enough local labour to satisfy demand during peak harvesting periods, and skilled migrants on 457 visas play a vital role on Australian farms by providing a workforce during these critical times."

"Ensuring the application and approval processes are suitable for workers and employers is vital to arrest the drop in visa numbers in the state."

Mark Glazbrook, Managing Director of Migration Solutions, agrees that the drop in 457 visa approvals needs to be addressed to help improve the economic outlook for the state.

"Opening up employment opportunities in South Australia to more skilled migrants could certainly be an effective way to increase productivity in the state and to create more jobs," said Mr Glazbrook.

"This is a concerning trend that looks set to continue in 2016. Skilled migrants are an important source of labour, particularly to horticultural businesses. The process of applying for a 457 visa must be assessed and improved to ensure it is not too burdensome for workers to come to regional South Australia."

**ENDS**

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