



The Hon David Coleman MP
Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs

The Hon Dan Tehan MP
Member for Wannon

10 December 2018

**NEW AGREEMENT TO HELP VICTORIA'S GREAT SOUTH COAST
REGION FILL SKILL GAPS**

Employers on the Victorian south-west coast have been given a boost, with a new visa agreement between the Commonwealth and Warrnambool City Council set to attract skilled workers to the region.

The Commonwealth Government has been in discussions with a number of regions that are experiencing labour shortages to see whether a Designated Area Migration Agreement (DAMA) could be put in place to supplement the local workforce.

The Great South Coast region will be among-the first across the country to enter into a five-year agreement with the Commonwealth.

This agreement will assist key agriculture, hospitality and other businesses on the Great South Coast fill critical employment gaps by providing them access to a broader range of overseas workers than is available through the standard skilled migration programs.

Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs David Coleman said the Government is committed to supporting the skills needs of regional Australia where Australian workers are not available to fill those jobs.

"The Government is working to improve our immigration program to better match the needs of specific locations," Mr Coleman said.

"In particular, we are looking closely at ways of filling employment gaps in regional areas. The Great South Coast region has been calling out for workers for some time."

Member for Wannon Dan Tehan, said: “Employers and communities throughout Glenelg, Moyne, Warrnambool, Corangamite, Colac-Otway and Southern Grampians shires have been searching for the workers that will help our region grow.

“Earlier this year, our councils took a delegation to Canberra reinforcing what our employers have been saying about the need for workers to help them, and our region, to grow.

“The Morrison Government has listened, and now we will deliver an agreement suited to the needs of our local communities. Crucially local workers will always come first.

“We’re one of Australia’s leading agricultural regions, and this agreement will help us produce more, sell more and export more. This is fantastic news.”

For a DAMA to be approved by the Commonwealth, regions must demonstrate efforts to recruit Australians first and clearly identify labour market conditions and gaps. They must also demonstrate local support available to migrant workers.

Warrnambool City Council Mayor Cr Tony Herbert said the DAMA was a tremendous initiative to help overcome the skill shortages.

“We’re thrilled to have a DAMA in place and to be an ‘early adopter’ of this employment solution,” Cr Herbert said.

“And of course being also a pathway to possible permanent residency makes this a very attractive proposition for prospective workers and for the population growth of our region.

“Importantly the DAMA is a bespoke arrangement for our region and addresses our particular skill shortages.

“People should also be reassured that every effort is required to be made to fill vacancies locally before the DAMA is used to attract skilled workers from outside the region.”

Only one other DAMA is in place across the country, with the Northern Territory having signed up in 2015. A new DAMA for the Northern Territory is expected to be in place before the end of the week.

The Government is currently in discussions with a range of other regions around the country experiencing skill shortages, including the Pilbara and the Kalgoorlie-Boulder regions in WA, Cairns in far North Queensland, and the Orana region in central NSW.

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