



Dale Last MP
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Shadow Minister for Police and Corrective Services, Shadow Minister for Fire and Emergency Services
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Media Release - Crunch time for fresh local fruit & veges

Consumers throughout Australia could miss out on the freshest fruits and vegetables if farm labour shortages are not addressed in coming days according to Shadow Minister Rural and Regional Affairs, Dale Last, and Shadow Minister for Agriculture, Tony Perrett.

Both Shadow Ministers knew the pressure to allow Pacific Island Labourers to work in North Queensland was mounting but, according to Mr Last, time for a solution was quickly running out.

“The longer the to-ing and fro-ing drags on, the higher the chance that crops won’t be planted,” Mr Last said. “The effect on rural communities in Queensland will be devastating if that happened but, regardless of where you live, we will all pay the price for inaction.”

“We are talking about massive crops effectively vanishing and that means astronomically higher prices in the supermarket if the product is available at all.”

After meeting with some of the state’s largest producers, Mr Perrett said the lack of labour will have a devastating effect on one of Queensland’s major industries for decades.

“Instead of the world’s best fruit and vegetables Australian families face the prospect of having to rely on imported food or pay significantly more,” Mr Perrett said. “Lower quality food, or food that is too expensive, can have a negative effect on health and, of course, Queensland’s reputation as a reliable exporter of quality food could be damaged or destroyed.”

“What we need to see is the roadblocks to getting these workers here in the fields come down and Dale and I are calling on both the state and federal government to play their part as soon as possible. We’ve been dealing with the effects of COVID-19 for nearly a year now and we still have no solution.”

“This is important work that needs to be done and, quite obviously, locals are not filling these positions. Instead of just hoping, both the state and federal governments need to work together, make a plan, make a commitment and make it happen.”

“The possible effects of that not happening is devastating for producers, families and the economy.”

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