



Luscious Citrus Pty Ltd



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Guaranteed minimum casual rate

This decision to implement a minimum wage to the current piece rate is going to be detrimental to both farmers and workers, while the farmers doing the wrong thing will continue to neglect the rules and take advantage of their workers. So essentially this new plan is going to negatively affect all the farmers, that have already been doing the right thing, on their bottom line.

- We rely on the current piece rate agreement as it allows the citrus to be picked with minimal supervision as it is a challenge in the orchard, with varying distance between workers, to implement a cost-effective program to ensure everyone is always supervised. This change to award will mean that all pickers will need to be supervised to prevent lazy and underperforming workers from bludging in the field and earning a wage that may not reflect their work production. This will be a huge economic burden to the farmers.
- We will be unable to employ any elderly or semi-retired persons wishing to continue working, by their own choice and who do so at a slower rate not meeting the average, due to the increased labour costs versus outputs.
- It encourages laziness in employees who work at the average piece rate, to reduce work efficiency and fall below the average knowing that they can rely on getting the minimum casual rate of \$25.41.
- It removes the flexibility of persons on the piece rate who wish to take extra breaks throughout the day and earn less than the award. These persons will no longer be employed if they have to be paid at the base rate.
- It will create a larger unemployed workforce from persons who are unable to improve to meet average competency levels. Farmers will be unable to employ persons who don't improve to the competency level of the minimum casual rate. This also creates more administration work in hiring, training, and bookwork of staff turnover.

Dan Walton refers to the problem as "Too many farmers have been able to manipulate the piece-rate system." 'Too many' is not the same as all and this perfectly highlights the that changes to the existing Horticulture Award will go after 'all' farmers rather than the 'too many' doing the wrong thing.

A Solution

A more appropriate solution would be to individually audit each employer implementing a piecework arrangement either in person or via online submissions and then following up on employers that don't provide documentation that fits with current legislation and/or demonstrates fairness.

This is not just a farmer's problem, there are plenty of underperforming individuals who don't work enough to be entitled to a guaranteed minimum wage. There will be a rise in unemployed Australians, and this will be a true reflection of the usefulness of this Fair Work implementation in the industry.

Sincerely,

Luscious Citrus Management