

Aussie crops set to be saved with school leavers 'PickPacking' their way around the country

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With international backpacking no longer an option, a new initiative by social enterprise Thankful4Farmers is calling on school leavers to create an alternative rite-of-passage by PickPacking their way around the country for the adventure of a lifetime, while helping save the livelihoods of farmers facing unparalleled labour shortages as a result of COVID-19.

A dedicated Go and Pick website, launched today, is a one-stop information platform for 18-25 year olds to connect with employers, review job opportunities and a suite of support resources, including government relocation grants, Austudy benefits and more.

Thankful Founder and CEO, Kim McDonnell said: "There has been widespread public discussion about the potential impact of harvest labour shortage on Australia's farmers and their crops, and the flow-on effects on availability and cost of fruit and veg for consumers.

Go And Pick aims to tackle these issues by tapping into new gap year options for Australian school leavers with the intention that, over time, the campaign will reduce Australian farmers' long-term reliance on overseas and seasonal labour.

Ms McDonnell acknowledges that in the past fruit picking has been regarded the poor cousin to overseas gap year travel but says the tide is turning. "There are some fantastic opportunities for school-leavers including benefits and rewards plus it's a wonderful way to meet new people, make some money, and travel around one of the most beautiful countries in the world".

Sydney raised 19 year old, Guy Nicol, is currently at university in Canberra and looking to be a PickPacker to support his studies in environment and sustainability.

"I've just finished my first year at uni and I'd really like to get out into regional New South Wales and work at either a cherry or tomato farm as it is relevant to my degree.

"I'm currently researching accommodation and then I'll be able to decide where to go. I'm really excited by the opportunity and what I will learn," said Guy.

Discussions are currently in place to create labelling on the fruit and veg with QR codes that show the personal journey of the PickPacker and creating opportunities for proud PickPacker parents to share their child's accomplishments.

"Ultimately we want our PickPackers to receive the acknowledgement their hard work deserves and to feel a strong sense of pride knowing the difference they've made to farmers and consumers," Ms McDonnell added.

To find out more information and follow the journey visit goandpick.com.au -ends-

About The New GAP Year – Go and Pick Each year Australian farmers rely on overseas seasonal workers and backpackers to help harvest fruit and vegetables. COVID-19 has closed borders and The Seasonal horticulture labour demand and workforce study, completed by EY, estimates that Australia's fruit and vegetable farmers need an additional 26,000 workers to harvest their crops. The New GAP Year aims to fill the labour void with Australian school leavers unable to fulfil their traditional rite-of-passage by heading overseas backpacking; instead they are being encouraged to become PickPackers- doing good, while earning money, learning new skills and having an Aussie adventure of a lifetime.

#thenewgapyear #goandpick #pickpackers #thankful4farmers #thankful4pickers

About Thankful4Farmers The Thankful4Farmers initiative aims to celebrate the important and significant contribution of farmers and agriculture to Australia's culture and economy. Through Go and Pick, Thankful4Farmers is unifying brands and industries to amplify support and multiply the impact, bringing industries together to make the BIGGEST difference to address this national challenge to encourage Aussies to PickPack in regional and rural Australia. For more information visit thankful4farmers.com.au.

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