

27 March 2020

Sent via email Minister.Littleproud@awe.gov.au
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Hon David Littleproud MP
Minister for Agriculture, Drought and Emergency Management
MG 64, Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Littleproud

Greenlife Industry Australia Member Businesses – Production and Retail Nurseries

Thank you for all your efforts and the efforts of your team and the Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment in assisting businesses in Australia's agriculture and primary production sectors to continue to operate and trade in these challenging times due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. We understand that agriculture and primary production are 'essential services' in maintaining Australia's food security.

Greenlife Industry Australia is the peak industry body representing production and retail nurseries in Australia. The production nursery industry alone has over 1,600 businesses, employing 23,000 FTEs and produces in excess of 2.0 billion plants annually with a "nursery" gate value of \$2.43 billion in the 2018/19 financial year.

We have been involved in a number of discussions, teleconferences and exchanged correspondence on various levels with Federal Government Ministries and Departments to request that production and retail nursery industry business are classified as essential primary production service businesses and can remain operating and able to trade as the level of "Lockdown" across the country escalates.

The Australian Tax Office classifies a primary producer as an individual, partnership, trust or company operating a primary production business if they undertake cultivating or propagating plants, fungi or their products or parts (including seeds, spores, bulbs and similar things) in any physical environment. Production and retail nursery business fit under this definition and make this representation for you to support nursery business as essential service.

In the worst case scenario, we request that businesses will be able to continue to undertake restricted nursery operations to keep plants alive due to their perishability during the shutdown period. At any one time we estimate in excess of \$4.0 billion of nursery stock is actively growing in Australia.



I appreciate the acknowledgment that agriculture and primary production are essential services for Australia and that the supply of planting material for production and ornamental horticulture is also vital. Production horticulture for fruit, nut and vegetable is vital for food security and nutrition and ornamental horticulture (gardens, parks, landscape) is vital physical and mental health and well-being as well as if more people are self-isolating at home then gardening is a fantastic activity to do.

I have been advised that the NZ Government announced earlier this week that plant nurseries, including retail garden centres, will be able to register as essential businesses under their COVID-19 planning process. To be registered a business must have a COVID-19 Prevention Plan.

If the Australian Department of Agriculture following direction from the Australia Government progresses to require the development and registration of a 'Plan', Greenlife Industry Australia has already developed a COVID-19 Contingency Plan template for businesses to complete. We could easily modify the template to ensure it includes any specific government requirements and assist the Government in establishing a register if required.

I would like to reiterate that the recognition of essential service for nursery growers and retailers be provided on the basis of trust, and in recognition of the importance of nursery stock to Australia during the current COVID-19 phase, in the recovery phase and beyond, as Australia's Greenlife Industry:

- Is made up predominantly of small to medium and family operations (growers, retailers and installers) who employ many from their local communities
- On the other side of the 'bridge', will be instrumental in the recovery phase of COVID-19 and as well as the regeneration of bushfire affected regions.
- Greenlife and gardens provide an opportunity for those self-isolating and socially distancing to maintain physical and mental health.
- Greenlife is evidenced to calm, sooth and reduce anxiety and often encourages the community outdoors, reducing stress.
- In these uncertain times, it would be a great result if we could provide some reassurance to the Greenlife Industry businesses about their production lines and support their human resource management at this time.

Please advise if you require any further information at this stage. I look forward to hearing from you in due course and working with you through this challenging period for Australia.

Yours faithfully



Glenn Fenton, President

Copy Greenlife Industry Australia Directors
Mark Tucker, Senior Agriculture Industry Engagement Officer for the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
Peter Vaughan, CEO Greenlife Industry Australia

