



WESTERN AUSTRALIA PARTY

CHARLES SMITH MLC

MEMBER FOR EAST METRO

Putting Western Australians First

MEDIA RELEASE

Major parties support workplace exploitation on farms

13 November 2020

Western Australia Party MP Charles Smith said today that the death of a strawberry farm worker yesterday in Bullsbrook, is the result of weak occupational health and safety for foreign workers.

The Malaysian migrant was crushed by harvesting machinery at a 'pick your own' strawberries farm while working alone in the fields.

Mr Smith, a Bullsbrook local, said the reality of poorly-paid work is often met with below-standard workplace health and safety regulations.

"Just a few weeks ago, the major parties supported the need for foreign workers on WA fruit farms and failed to recognise significant workplace exploitation along with increased competition the foreign work trade places on local jobs.

"It is clear major party politics is about enhancing profits at the expense of foreign workers' safety and wellbeing," said Mr Smith.

The strawberry farm where the incident occurred was recently investigated by Border Force officials for 36 cases of illegal foreign workers.

"The Minister for Agriculture Alannah MacTiernan recently pushed for an amnesty for illegal foreign workers on farms and completely failed to note the shoddy work conditions they are subjected to."

The Eastern Metropolitan MP said the major parties are complicit in workplace exploitation on farms.

"The solution would be to invest in better technology that would reduce reliance on cheap low-skilled labour that would enhance productivity and profitability for these farms.

"There would be no need to import foreigners to work in unsafe conditions and additionally, we could effectively chip into reducing WA's high unemployment rate.

"As a bonus, naturally we would also see a significant increase in workers' wages," said Mr Smith.

Mr Smith has long advocated to scrap the foreign worker trade stating it contributes to high local unemployment while suppressing local workers wage growth.

ENDS

Media Contact:

Haylee Ruwaard
0418 616 444

Suite 13, 9 the Avenue Midland WA 6056

charles.smith@mp.wa.gov.au

www.charlessmithmlc.com