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**“CONSUMERS and SMALL BUSINESS the LOSERS WITH HORTICULTURE CODE”**

“Consumers and small business will be the losers under the Federal Government’s mandatory Horticultural Code for the Grower/Wholesale sector” says Sydney Markets Limited CEO, Brad Latham.

The Code is currently before Federal Parliament and is due to come into effect on the 14 May 2007. It will apply to Fruit and Vegetable Growers in their business dealings with Wholesalers.

“The Code is complicated and impractical for small business with more than a 300% increase in the volume of paperwork required. It is ridiculous that a Grower selling a box of lettuce to a Wholesaler located just 50 metres away in our Central Markets has to deal with up to seven documents” said Sydney Markets Limited CEO, Brad Latham. “Sydney Markets is open to the public and thousands of people do business here each day. How can a Grower or a Wholesaler be expected to distinguish between each and every buyer to determine whether the Code applies?” added Mr Latham.

The Code requires prices to be agreed in writing between Growers and Wholesalers immediately upon delivery and before a Wholesaler can sell the product. “Will Growers sending to the Markets be contactable and willing to negotiate prices at 2.00 am when their produce is delivered? I don’t think so” said Mr Latham.

Instead of produce being sold on the day it arrives, it will have to be held over until a price is agreed. Sydney Markets receives up to 3,000 pallets of produce each day and does not have the capacity to hold stock over unnecessarily. The only option may be to return undelivered produce to Growers at their cost or throw it out. “This is the last thing Markets businesses want but what choice is there?” Mr Latham pointed out.

The impracticable nature of the Code Regulation clearly demonstrates a lack of understanding of the already efficient supply chain that operates through the central Markets system. Forcing perishable product to be held over until signed agreements are in place is a joke and will not benefit anyone. All it will do is impose unnecessary costs and slow up the supply chain. In the end it will be the consumer who pays more for their fruit and vegetables.

“On behalf of the thousands of Growers who supply Sydney Markets and the hundreds of Growers and Wholesalers who operate small businesses here, I call on the Government to either withdraw the Code Regulation or make it workable so that it does not add cost to small business, the supply chain and the consumer pocket” said Mr Latham.

**About Sydney Markets**

*Sydney Markets Limited owns and operates Australia’s largest market and is recognized as a world leader in fresh produce and community market management. Approximately 120 wholesalers, 394 produce growers, 172 flower growers and over 160 supporting businesses are located on site at Flemington. More than 5000 people work in businesses at Sydney Markets.*

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