



AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION

24 Brisbane Avenue Barton ACT 2600 • PO Box 4286 Manuka ACT 2603 • Australia
email: aha@aha.org.au • Facsimile: (02) 6273 4011 • Telephone: (02) 6273 4007
Web: www.aha.org.au

MEDIA RELEASE

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Wanted: 56,000 hotel workers

The Government has made it harder for employers to fill labour shortages with overseas workers, now it needs to do more to get Australians working where the jobs are.

The Federal Government's attack on 457 visas will have no credibility unless backed by a genuine attempt to improve the way it connects local job seekers with employers needing workers.

AHA National CEO Des Crowe says the hotel industry is desperate for labour, but the Government's Job Services Australia (JSA) network is not delivering on employer demand.

"Promoting Australian recruitment and cracking down on 457 visas is meaningless unless more is done to connect Australian employers to Australian job seekers", Mr Crowe said.

"The hotel industry would prefer to employ Australians, but we need to be able to find them in order to put them into jobs.

"The hotel industry already has 36,000 unfilled vacancies, and this figure will rise to 56,000 by 2020 if current trends continue.

"Tightening restrictions on overseas workers will make it more difficult for employers to fill jobs, so the question now is what will the Government do to get Australian job seekers into Australian job vacancies?"

"The JSA network is supposed to connect Australian job seekers with employment opportunities, but the unfortunate reality is that the only meaningful engagement appears to be with large employers with locations around the country.

"Hospitality is predominantly a small business industry, and we need the JSAs who understand the hospitality industry to connect with local employers not just with big business. Currently the hotel and hospitality sector is being ignored by JSAs."

Mr Crowe said the AHA has a track record of actively promoting hospitality careers, including the current *Employ Outside the Box* program for disadvantaged job seekers, and called for renewed Government support for industry-driven employment services.

"The AHA is currently providing skills advice to 600 hotels through the Workforce Futures Program. This presents an ideal opportunity for a tourism and hospitality focused JSA to work with the industry as we roll out the program.

"The previous Employer Broker Program provided funding allowing the AHA to facilitate employment by identifying demand and working with local JSAs to fill vacancies. It is clear that unless this matching exercise occurs, JSAs will continue to ignore the hospitality sector.

"The JSA system was established to assist the disadvantaged to find work, but the result has been the creation of a class of disadvantaged employers unable to tap into the available labour supply because job seekers are being directed to big employers.

“Encouraging employers to maximise the potential of the local workforce by employing workers with a disability, mature-age or disadvantaged workers is nothing more than a gesture unless there are resources available for linking jobs with job seekers.

“As long as employment services fail to recognise the demands of business there will continue to be debate over the need for overseas workers to address labour and skills shortages.”

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***Media enquiries:
Steven Fanner – Corporate Affairs Manager
0402 913 603***

**The job vacancy figures used by the AHA are those identified by Deloitte Access Economics in its Australian Tourism Labour Force Report prepared for the Department of Resources, Energy & Tourism in 2011*