



AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION

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MEDIA RELEASE

18 November 2010

Minister's workforce comments welcome - Now time for action

The Australian Hotels Association has welcomed this week's acknowledgement by Tourism Minister Martin Ferguson that workforce productivity gains are the key to growing the nation's tourism industry.

The Minister made the remarks in his opening speech at the Tourism Directions conference in Canberra, saying "higher productivity growth is essential for the industry to provide better infrastructure, service and products", while "the industry must attract and retain a high quality labour force".

AHA National Accommodation Division President John Dickson said the Minister's remarks were on the mark.

"There is no doubt that hotels are struggling to deal with a shortage of labour and skills in a number of key areas and that this is constraining the development of the industry", Mr Dickson said.

"The challenge will be to identify strategies to fill some of these gaps, and this is why the AHA is working closely with the Government through the Labour & Skills Working Group as part of the National Long Term Tourism Strategy. We are also urging the Government to reinstate qualified chefs to the Skilled Occupation List as an area of immediate concern.

"The development of a workforce that has the skills and the size to meet the needs of a growing industry is critical, and it is therefore pleasing to see the Minister understands its significance."

Mr Dickson said the AHA would be supporting the rollout of a new workforce planning study being undertaken by the Commonwealth.

"This survey will help to identify the workforce needs of the industry for the next five years and provide information that will help to drive action from hotels and government to deliver desired outcomes. The AHA will be encouraging its members to complete the survey because until work like this is undertaken there will be competing priorities across industry sectors and across government agencies. The outcomes of this survey will help to identify priority areas we can then pursue with the Government."

Mr Dickson said the AHA was prepared with a workforce development strategy for the industry which would be guided by the results of the survey.

"Through Service Skills Australia, the AHA has helped to develop a detailed workforce development strategy that identifies our needs and provides a blueprint for building the skill set of our existing workers and attracting skills where they are most needed.

"The AHA is also working with the Government on a workplace innovation program for the hospitality workforce as well as an employer broker program. We are exploring all other employment avenues but the growing demand for skilled labour in our hotels must also be met."

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