



AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Minister 'goes overboard' on 457 visas

The Australian Hotels Association (AHA) today expressed serious concern with comments in the Parliament by the Immigration Minister attacking the tourism and hospitality industry.

AHA National CEO Des Crowe said the Minister's suggestion that hospitality employers are no longer providing jobs for young Australians is disappointing and indicates the Government is playing politics at the expense of good policy.

"The AHA is urging the Government not to go overboard with its own rhetoric on overseas workers and to instead focus on achieving the best policy outcome, one that protects workers' entitlements and meets the labour needs of business.

"In contrast to the Minister's statement today, jobs in hospitality and tourism remain some of the best opportunities for young Australians to engage in the workforce. Millions of Australians started their working life waiting tables or pulling beers in their local hotel, and every year many thousands more continue to do so."

"The reality is that there were 5,390¹ 457 visas granted in the industry over the past 12 months from a total industry workforce of 796,000², amounting to less than one per cent of all workers. This figure includes visas held by many cooks and chefs working not in hotels or restaurants but in other businesses such as hospitals, aged care facilities and mining sites.

"Despite making up a relatively small proportion of the industry workforce, 457 visas remain an important part of business strategies to overcome shortages of skills and labour that can't be filled by the local population.

"Another confusing element of the Minister's continued attack on the industry is that the AHA actually supported the move to provide the Fair Work Ombudsman with extra resources to enforce employer compliance with visa conditions.

"In contrast to the Minister's comments, Federal Government agencies such as Tourism Australia and the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations are working to facilitate employer access to overseas workers as a way of addressing documented shortages.

"The Government is clearly struggling to justify increasing restrictions on overseas workers, but it is unfair to label the hospitality and tourism industry as the scapegoat.

"If the Government was serious about job creation for Australians and boosting apprentice numbers it wouldn't have scrapped the Employer Broker Program, which helped connect job seekers with hotel industry vacancies. In addition, the Job Services Australia network is failing to deliver for small business sectors like hospitality which are seen as a low priority.

"If employers could fill their labour needs locally, there would be no need or desire for overseas workers, but for as long as there are local labour shortages, businesses will continue needing to find workers from overseas to fill these gaps."

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¹ Department of Immigration & Citizenship – [Subclass 457 State/Territory Summary Report 2012/13](#)

² See the Federal Government's Skills Info website – <http://www.skillsinfo.gov.au/industry-information/accommodation-and-food-services>