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## **HOSPITALITY SECTOR WELCOMES SKILLED WORKER CHANGES**

Changes to rules around Working Holiday Makers (WHM) in remote parts of Australia will help ease the hospitality skills shortage in those areas, Australian Hotels Association CEO Stephen Ferguson said today.

The Federal Government announced changes to the visa scheme for Working Holiday Makers late yesterday, adding tourism and hospitality to the “specified subclass 417 and 462 visa” lists in “remote and very remote” regions as well as Northern Australia.

Mr Ferguson said this meant Working Holiday Makers would be able to qualify for their second and third year visas by working in tourism and hospitality in areas like Broken Hill (NSW), Kangaroo Island (SA) or Alice Springs (NT).

The changes come on top of the addition of chefs to the Priority Skilled Migration Occupation List yesterday - a move also welcomed by the AHA and its sister organisation Tourism Accommodation Australia. Both peak hospitality associations have pushed for the changes.

“Many areas of remote Australia rely heavily on Working Holiday Makers to supplement their domestic workforce,” Mr Ferguson said.

We welcome any changes which make it easier for Working Holiday Makers to work and for our struggling hotels and pubs to employ much needed staff for customers who want to enjoy Australian hospitality, accommodation and tourism.

“Our first preference is always to hire Australians first. There are huge financial incentives for us to hire local – and they remain. For example, to bring in an overseas worker like a skilled chef can cost a hotel anything from \$10,000 to \$25,000 when you factor in visa fees, skills assessments, migration lawyers etc.”

“This will put more workers where they are most needed. It’s a ‘win-win as we work to rebuild our hard-hit sector and lead a world-class hospitality recovery.”

Tourism Accommodation Australia CEO Michael Johnson said many accommodation hotels were desperate for workers in regional areas in particular.

“Many remote tourism hotspots are booming at the moment but the simple fact is there are not enough workers to service the accommodation sector,” Mr Johnson said.

“Adding chefs to the Priority Skilled Migration List and amending the visa requirements for Working Holiday Makers in remote and very remote areas of Australia are great steps towards starting to alleviate this chronic workforce shortage.”

Working Holiday Makers are currently capped at working for one employer in six months in any one location. That will also now be waived for remote and very remote areas.

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