



**MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **HOTEL INDUSTRY WELCOMES VISA CHANGES**

The nation's peak hospitality body has welcomed changes to the rebate visa application fees announced by the Federal Government today.

AHA National CEO Stephen Ferguson said the changes will encourage international students and Working Holiday Makers (WHM) to return to Australia and begin to address the huge staff shortages across the hospitality sector.

Mr Ferguson said more than 100,000 positions were vacant across the sector nationally and hotels were being forced to close on certain days or reduce hours during their busiest period because they simply do not have the staff.

"Our industry is struggling to recover from the worst 18 months in our history and the recovery is being hampered by a dire skills shortage across the nation," he said.

"Australia is in a global competition for international students and WHM's and anything that can increase our competitiveness is welcomed."

Mr Ferguson said before the pandemic almost 400,000 international students and 250,000 working holiday makers were employed each year in Australia and many of them worked in pubs, hotels and restaurants across the country.

"It was already very hard to find staff without WHM and International students and many people leaving hospitality altogether," he said.

"But when you lose thousands of people either off sick with the Omicron variant or isolating because of a close contact, many businesses have had to close altogether."

"The Federal Government has listened to industry and these changes will make an immediate difference."

Mr Ferguson said the AHA is also targeting older workers who lost jobs during the pandemic and have the 'soft skills' needed to work in a pub.

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