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ACCOMMODATION AUSTRALIA HONOURS OUT-GOING CHAIR

Accommodation Australia (AA) has paid tribute to the hard work and dedication of its inaugural Chair, industry icon Leanne Harwood, who has announced her resignation from the position.

AA CEO Michael Johnson said Ms Harwood had been offered a new job opportunity within her own IHG organisation and would be re-locating to the United States next month.

Ms Harwood is the first Chair of the nation's peak accommodation body – which officially merged in July last year after lengthy negotiations between the Accommodation Association and Tourism Accommodation Australia.

In her resignation letter, Ms Harwood said, while sad to move on, she left the Association in great shape.

"I am incredibly proud of all we have achieved together over the last two years, bringing together two distinctly different, but purposely aligned organisations to create an incredibly strong single-voice for our industry," she said.

"The position I've held as Chair has given me the opportunity to give back to an industry that I love and has in turn, returned more than I could have hoped."

Mr Johnson, who worked alongside Ms Harwood during the lengthy amalgamation process, paid tribute to her skills.

"You could not have asked for a better, more professional leader during what was at times a complicated process," Mr Johnson said.

"Leanne has steered the Association through uncharted waters and her contribution will be felt by the accommodation sector for years to come."

"Achievements during Leanne's time include defeating the proposed Victorian bed tax, a \$10m Federal Government jobs and careers grant, closer state and Federal ties and great head-way on the chronic problem of skilled workers."

David Canny, President of AA's parent organisation the Australian Hotels Association, said AA's loss was "a great win" for IHG in Atlanta.

"The accommodation sector is forever indebted for Leanne's leadership, in ensuring Accommodation Australia was actually formed - an incredible achievement, seamless in its execution," he said.

"I have loved working with Leanne, learnt a lot, and just as importantly will miss Leanne's friendship and quick wit."

Ms Harwood will also resign from her roles on the AHA National Executive and National Board. A replacement will be announced in coming weeks.

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