AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION | ACCOMMODATION AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

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"COMMON SENSE" CHANGES TO WORKING HOLIDAY MAKER REFORMS WELCOMED

The Australian Hotels Association and Accommodation Australia have welcomed changes announced by the Minister for Home Affairs, Hon Tony Burke MP, to the proposed Working Holiday Maker (WHM) visa arrangements, describing them as "positive and pragmatic".

Today's changes include:

- Current Working Holiday Makers will have until 28 February 2027 to complete the relevant specified work and lodge a valid application under the existing process.
- From 1 March 2027, people seeking a second or third WHM visa (except UK citizens) will need to hold a Next Year Regional Work Guarantee.
- People will receive the Guarantee by registering their interest and being invited to apply. A portal to register interest will be open from 1 December 2026.
- The specified work requirement for a second visa will increase from three months to four months from 1 March 2027.
- The third WHM visa cap increases from 5,000 to 25,000.
- The requirement for a third visa will remain at six months.

AHA National CEO Stephen Ferguson said the hospitality sector welcomed today's changes as a victory for common-sense.

"This is a much better outcome for regional and remote Australia than when the new migration measures were first announced".

"All Australian businesses would prefer to hire Australians first, but where they can't be found backpackers (WHM) fill the gaps and these changes are positive and pragmatic.

"To be blunt, we would have preferred to keep the old demand-driven system but the Government has listened to our concerns, and we can work with this new policy.Now we just need to get on with it and provide business and backpackers alike with some certainty."

Accommodation Australia CEO James Goodwin agreed.

"These are sensible and welcome changes which recognise the important contribution Working Holiday Makers make to Australia's accommodation and tourism industry - particularly in the regions," he said.

"Delaying the start until February will also give businesses and workers more time to prepare for the new arrangements as we head into the busy summer period. The hotel industry will continue working with the Government to improve the processing of skilled visas such as Chefs to ensure the industry has the right people in the right places."

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