

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Monday, 1 July 2019**

**VISA PROGRAM EXPANSION WELCOMED BY INDUSTRY**

Tourism Accommodation Australia (TAA) welcomes today's announcement by the Federal Government of an expansion to the Working Holiday Maker (WHM) visa program.

TAA CEO Michael Johnson said the changes demonstrate the Government is listening to the concerns of Australia's accommodation and hospitality industry regarding existing and projected labour shortages.

"It is reassuring to see the Coalition Government putting in place measures to help address industry concerns about labour shortages," Mr Johnson said.

"Each year Working Holiday Makers play a crucial role in Australia's hotels, restaurants, pubs and taverns."

"The expansion of the Working Holiday Maker visa program will incentivise young workers to come to Australia and stay for longer."

"This will not only deliver a dividend in terms of increasing an important source of labour, but the evidence shows that Working Holiday Makers spend what they earn in Australia and disperse widely throughout Australia's regional areas."

"Allowing eligible visa holders to access a third year in Australia, increasing the number of visas allocated to our partner counties and raising the eligible age for French applicants to 35 ensures Australia remains an attractive option for young travellers."

"Today's announcement will help businesses access to the labour they require, allowing them to grow and create more jobs."

Whilst the expansion of the WHM visa program is welcome news, TAA urges the Federal Government to look at reforms to Australia's skilled migration program to help address labour shortages throughout the accommodation and hospitality industry.

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