

Monday, April 26 2021

### **STAFF SHORTAGE HOLDING BACK REGIONAL RECOVERY**

Hotel industry leaders said the post-COVID hospitality recovery in regions like the Blue Mountains is being held back by chronic and unsustainable staff shortages.

Tourism Accommodation Australia NSW CEO Michael Johnson and Destination Sydney Surrounds North GM Glenn Caldwell met with general managers from the Blue Mountains leading accommodation hotels at a lunch held at The Carrington in Katoomba on Friday, 23 April 2021.

Mr Johnson said regions like the Blue Mountains were doing much better in comparison to this time last year but were hamstrung by a lack of workers.

“The overall story in the regions is good when you compare it to last year, but it could be better,” said Mr Johnson.

“This time last year, just after the bushfires and in the middle of lockdown, hotel occupancy in the Blue Mountains region was at just seven per cent.

“Hotel occupancy in the area is now back above 70 per cent but restaurant numbers are restricted because hotels simply don’t have enough staff to accommodate all the bookings.

“With no international students or working holiday makers hotels are struggling to find food and beverage workers, chefs and other skilled staff.

“They have had to turn back much-needed bookings and forgo revenue because they simply can’t handle the capacity at the moment – that’s why TAA is pushing the Federal Government for immediate changes to the visa system to help with this chronic shortage. Our number one priority is Australians in jobs – but the workforce simply isn’t there.”

Mr Johnson said some of the Association’s most successful hotel groups are more than 50 per cent down on job applications for the same time last year, despite an unemployment rate of more than 5 per cent.

He said hospitality and tourism businesses in the Blue Mountains region were still getting back on their feet and were missing international tourists.

“Operators in the area are missing the day trippers and international visitors but the regions are still doing better than the CBD, with city hotels seeing mid-week occupancy rates languish around 30 per cent.”

**Media Contact: Craig Vaughan 0423 796 382**