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HOSPITALITY SECTOR WELCOMES SKILLED WORKER CHANGES

The nation's peak hospitality bodies have welcomed a Federal Government announcement which will help partly address the chronic nationwide skills shortage.

The Australian Hotels Association and Tourism Accommodation Australia have pushed for the inclusion of chefs to the Priority Skilled Migration Occupation List in an effort to alleviate the worker crisis.

AHA National CEO Stephen Ferguson said today's addition of chefs could not have come at a better time.

"Our international borders remain closed and we cannot access the usual stream of international chefs who form a critical part of our workforce," Mr Ferguson said.

"Hotels in regional parts of Australia hard-hit by bushfires and droughts are desperate for chefs in particular with some pub and hotel restaurants closed during the week due to the worker shortage.

"Some of our most successful hotels are currently more than 50% down on job applications for the same time last year.

"Our priority is always to employ Aussies first, and always will be, but international chefs add to the hospitality experience helping our businesses provide a world-best service as we move into the global COVID recovery phase.

"There are huge financial incentives for us to hire local – and they remain. To bring in an overseas worker like a chef costs a business anything from \$10,000 to \$25,000 when you factor in visa fees, skills assessments, migration lawyers etc and you have to wait for three months and then repeat it all again in two or four years. It's not something entered into lightly but the fact is many hospitality businesses have no other option."

Tourism Accommodation Australia CEO Michael Johnson also welcomed the move.

"The accommodation sector has been going through tough times with a severe shortage of front-line workers like chefs – that's why we welcome today's announcement by the Federal Government," Mr Johnson said.

"Adding chefs to the Priority Skilled Migration Occupation List is a great first step which will put accommodation hotels in a much better position."

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