




BYTAP's response to questions on notice from the Inquiry into Tourism and International Education

28 February 2024

1. Statistics on Working Holiday Maker (WHM) scheme

While the pandemic meant the temporary halt on WHM arrivals, the past year has seen a significant return in WHM visa numbers. The table below show the peak period was 2012-13. 2022-23 WHM visas granted were close to reaching this target and continued growth in 2023-2024 is expected.¹



Australian Government

Department of Home Affairs

Working Holiday Maker visas granted pivot table

2023-24 to 31 December 2023 - comparison with previous years

Citizenship Country (All)

Financial Year Quarter (All)

Gender (All)

Visa Type (All)

Age at Lodgement (All)

Sum of Total	Financial Year of Visa Grant																		
Visa Subclass	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24 to 31 December 2023
417 Working Holiday	114,693	134,993	154,339	187,907	175,746	185,480	214,644	249,231	229,378	214,830	195,673	191,955	185,450	180,223	122,673	31,207	79,896	178,306	100,119
462 Work and Holiday	751	1,812	3,488	6,409	7,422	7,442	8,348	9,017	10,214	11,982	18,910	19,056	25,006	28,813	26,576	8,379	17,463	46,125	22,269
Grand Total	115,444	136,805	157,827	194,316	183,168	192,922	222,992	258,248	239,592	226,812	214,583	211,011	210,456	209,036	149,249	39,586	97,359	224,431	122,388

According to statistics provided by the Immigration Programs Division of the Department of Home Affairs “as of 29 February 2024 there were over 181,200 WHM visa holders in Australia (a 40 per cent increase on WHM from the same period last year).”

According to research completed by Flinders University:

- The average total expenditure of a WHM is \$26,800;
- Four in five employers from the agriculture, and tourism and hospitality industries reported WHMs were very important to their business;
- 94.2% of WHMs reported they would recommend the program to friends;²
- A government evaluation of the WHM program in 2009 estimated the gross contribution to expenditure in the Australian economy in 2007 – 2008 was \$1.8 billion.³

2. Structure of BYTAP

¹ <https://data.gov.au/dataset/ds-dga-602f74a0-a588-4dea-ae28-0fe123cbb182/details?q=>

² [The Australian experience. Perceptions of Australia's Working Holiday Maker \(WHM\) program 2019 – 2020 Flinders University July 2021 Ann-Louise Hordacre, Cecilia, Moretti, Hamish Gamble and Sarah Crossman](#)

³ Tan, Y., Richardson, S., Lester, L., Bai, T., & Sun, L. (2009) *Evaluation of Australia's Working Holiday Maker (WHM) Program*, Belconnen, ACT: Department of Immigration and Citizenship

The Backpacker & Youth Tourism Advisory Panel (BYTAP) is the peak national representative body for the Australian inbound youth tourism sector. BYTAP's principal role is to represent the interests at a national level, working in collaboration with the relevant state youth tourism associations.

BYTAP committee members work in a voluntary capacity and include senior representatives from transport, accommodation, as well as inbound agents and other relevant youth tourism segments. <https://bytap.org/committee/>

BYTAP is funded by state youth tourism associations which are also operated by industry volunteers. Currently the associations which support BYTAP are in three states of Australia:

- a) Youth Tourism NSW – 56 members www.youthtourismnsw.org.au
- b) Youth Tourism Victoria – 41 members <https://ytv.org.au/>
- c) Adventure Queensland – 34 members www.adventurequeensland.com.au/

BYTAP also consults directly with operators in states and territories where no formal association is established.

To become a state association member, members must be registered or accredited in their individual areas of operation and their application verified before acceptance.

The states associations and the industry maintain regular contact with BYTAP, with representatives meeting 3-4 times per year as well as meeting during the annual industry conference held in Queensland every November.

<https://www.adventuretourismawards.com.au/about-the-conference/>

During the pandemic BYTAP drafted a pilot plan with the aim for WHMs to return ahead of the public to address critical labour shortages in agriculture and hospitality, and to assist the tourism industry who had been heavily impacted by the borders closing. A small working group advocating for the early return of WHMs was formed and include BYTAP, Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC), National Farmer Federation (NFF), Qantas and the Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ACCI).

3. Further information on hostels which closed during pandemic

During the pandemic a significant number of hostels closed in Australia. By December 2022, 19 of YHA Australia's hostels had permanently closed, and the Nomads hostel brand had shut down and sold six of its 16 properties.⁴ In regional Australia, the closure of hostels like Coffs Harbour YHA (a centre for blueberry picking) were permanent and increased accommodation shortages for WHMs working in these areas that continue today. Hostels like Caravella and Globetrotters in Cairns also closed and have not reopened, putting stress on other those hostels who did reopen as well as other accommodation providers in the area.

4. Potential for local Councils to provide more support to WHMs in need

Consulates currently provide emergency support to their citizens, and BYTAP believes that this support, together with the current support mechanisms offered by Fair Work and other government departments and should continue unchanged. While local governments should

⁴ <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/how-hostels-are-being-redefined-in-the-post-pandemic-era>

encourage WHMs to visit and work, it is unlikely they have the resources to offer more fundamental support.

However, BYTAP acknowledges that there is an opportunity to consider other mechanisms to support the WHM experience, particularly in regional Australia. In the Flinders University research, employers flagged a government hotline and a centralised government employment register or job board. BYTAP would support the consideration of these mechanisms.

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