



**House of Representatives
Employment, Workplace Relations
& Workforce Participation**

AUSTRALIAN HOTELS ASSOCIATION

WA BRANCH

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Background

The Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations has requested the Committee to inquire into and report on workforce challenges in the Australian tourism sector, with particular reference to:

- Current and future employment trends in the industry
- Current and emerging skill shortages and appropriate recruitment, co-ordinated training and retention strategies
- Labour shortages and strategies to meet seasonal fluctuations in workforce demand
- Strategies to ensure employment in regional and remote areas and
- Innovative workplace measures to support further employment opportunities and business growth in the tourism sector.

The Australian Hotels Association – AHA (WA) has provided input into the Australian Hotels Associations National Office Submission. Western Australia is unique in the challenges facing the tourism and hospitality industry and the AHA (WA) welcomes the opportunity to provide further comment through this process.

Introduction

1. is the peak industrial organisation for employers in Western Australia's hotel and hospitality industry. Established in 1897 the AHA is also one of the State's oldest professional trade associations and represents over 85% of the hotel industry in this state. In addition the AHA (WA) has members that are restaurants, bars, function centres, resorts and special facility licences such as water vessels.
2. The AHA (WA) provides extensive industrial relations and human resource advice and representation. This includes advice on award and wage rates, unfair dismissal matters and representation, human resource policy and procedure, occupational health and safety and support for workforce recruitment and retention.
3. The AHA (WA) promotes world class practice in the industry through the provision of seminars, workshops and training programs. These programs are held throughout WA and they assist businesses in maintaining their reputation for professionalism.
4. The objectives and roles of the AHA (WA) are to:
 - maintain high standards of service and conduct in the liquor, hospitality, catering, tourism and entertainment industries
 - promote and protect the rights and interests of licensed businesses
 - monitor State and Federal Parliaments;
 - engage in commercial activities that are in the industries interest
 - representation to Government
 - extensive training programs
 - Industrial Award representation and Union negotiations
 - Workplace Relations advice including interpretation of industry Awards and WorkChoices legislation (Workplace Relations Act 1996)
 - Wage update service, including Award changes
 - Recruitment and Termination advice, letters of offer, employee contracts
 - Equal employment opportunity, discrimination and workplace issues
 - Mediation and negotiation services
 - Representation in the Industrial Relations Commission
5. Labour shortages in the Tourism and Hospitality sector are at critical levels with a number of businesses in WA forced to close doors on select days or entirely leaving many communities (particularly regional) without essential services.

Western Australian Workforce Challenges

6. Western Australia has a land area of over three million square kilometres and a population of just over two million people, of whom 1.5 million people live in Perth. This geographic situation presents workforce challenges in WA unlike any other State in Australia.
7. The Australian Government needs to consider that while Western Australia has such a low unemployment rate the challenge for the tourism and hospitality industry is not just a shortage of skilled labour there is in fact a major shortage of labour in general.
8. The Australian Government needs to consider policy initiatives aimed at rectifying the current labour and skills shortage problems, but at the same time initiate long term strategies aimed at developing new labour markets to shore up industry sustainability.
9. In order to do this the AHA (WA) suggests the following:
 - o Review current VISA restrictions to support a semi-skilled labour classification, rather than the current policy of skilled labour. The change would alleviate a number of labour shortage problems faced by the industry, particularly in regional areas.
 - o Support industry initiatives aimed at developing currently underutilised labour markets – women, mature age workers, sole parents, long-term unemployed, people with a disability and Indigenous Australians.
 - o Increase the allowable income for pensioners working in seasonal/remote locations, in particular those supplying own accommodation
 - o Consider suitable pilot locations for an employment model to bring together employers and training providers aimed at further skilling the industry
 - o Extend the maximum stay for Working Holiday Makers (WHM), with one employer to at least 12 months.
 - o Extend the range of industries that can apply for eligibility for visa extensions to include hospitality and tourism in seasonally impacted regions outside of Perth.
 - o Recognise Perth as a 'region' in the context of the WHM program's eligibility for visa extensions
 - o Extend the number of countries that currently have access to the WHM program.
 - o Use taxation policy to increase the take home living wage in remote areas to make it more equitable for tourism and hospitality workers of Western Australia.
 - o Reduce taxation levels applied to individuals who choose to have a second job.
 - o In conjunction with industry, investigate options for developing shared labour pools. That Australia's North West/ South West region is considered to be a suitable pilot location.
 - o Through the Department of Education and Training and The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations provide support to industry-led tourism and hospitality training programs to up-skill employees in order to encourage retention for current employees.

Conclusion

10. The AHA (WA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission into the Inquiry. The labour shortage facing the industry is a critical issue. The industry wants to be profitable and sustainable in the long term, ensure quality work opportunities and career options for employees. In the current climate the industry is seeking support from the Government in order to be able to achieve long term sustainability.