NT HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY STRENGTHENING TIES WITH TIMOR-LESTE

Over the past few days the Australian Hotels Association (NT Branch) has been working on strengthen ties between Timor-Leste and the NT’s hospitality industry, with meetings and site tours conducted with a Timor-Leste delegation.

As our closest neighbor, the NT Government has already recognised opportunities to create strong economic links between NT businesses and Timor-Leste.

The NT’s hospitality industry, particularly accommodation hotels have the opportunity to continue to build on the existing relationship the NT has with Timor-Leste through the Federal Government’s Seasonal Worker Program.

The Seasonal Worker Program allows workers from Timor-Leste to work in a variety of occupations within the hospitality industry (or other industries such as horticulture) for a 6 month session, with the ability to return each year.

This Program has run successfully for many years for accommodation hotels in Broome, accessing Timor-Leste workers. These workers have returned for peak tourism seasons each year and taken the skills they have developed on-the-job back to Timor-Leste.

From a recent Member survey the AHA (NT) conducted, 70% of hospitality businesses are expecting to grow over the next 12 months, requiring an additional 500 plus workers. With staff shortages and job vacancies already existing in the industry and this demand far outreaching the supply of locals, programs like the Seasonal Worker Program could be used in addition to the usual reliance on backpackers, particularly during the peak tourism season to fill these gaps.

The AHA (NT) sees an opportunity to replicate the success of the Seasonal Worker Program in Broome in places like Darwin during the dry season. It is hoped that the meetings and site visits the AHA (NT) have conducted with the Timor-Leste delegation will assist in sharing information and getting interest of local employers in the program.

Traditionally, the Northern Territory and Timor-Leste have had a strong bond and the Seasonal Worker Program is another opportunity to strengthen this bond.

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