POSITIVE NEWS FOR HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY FROM DEVELOPING THE NORTH PAPER

The Australian Hotels Association (NT Branch) has welcomed a number of workforce initiatives outlined in the Federal Government’s ‘Developing Northern Australia’ White Paper that aims to assist local hospitality businesses.

For many years the AHA (NT) has been lobbying the Federal Government to expand the requirement that Working Holiday Makers (WHM) can only work a maximum of 6 months with the one employer, particularly in the remote locations in the NT where staff are extremely difficult to recruit and retain. Furthermore, WHM were not entitled to work a second year in the hospitality industry.

The White Paper outlines an expansion of the WHM Visa Program in Northern Australia, which would allow these visa holders to work a maximum of 12 months for the one hospitality or tourism employer.

The tourism industry will also be included in the ‘specified’ work category, which would see both ‘Work and Holiday’ Visa holders and ‘Working Holiday’ Visa holders eligible for a second year stay on their Visa if they work 3 months of ‘specified’ work.

“The expansion of the Working Holiday Makers visa program will assist to reduce current staff turnover rates, increase consistency in staffing and service and increase the business confidence of local hospitality and tourism business,” said Des Crowe, AHA (NT) Chief Executive Officer.

The streamlining of the Seasonal Worker Program as well as more Federal Government funding support for businesses that utilise this Program to employ Pacific Island and Timor Leste workers was also seen as a positive step by the AHA (NT). The removal of the specified working period will enable NT hotels to consider using this option as to date take up has been nonexistent.

“Hospitality employers look to train and upskill locals as a priority, but the supply of local labour is not currently meeting the demand in our industry, and these labour gaps must be urgently addressed by other avenues, such as overseas workers,” said Mr. Crowe.

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