

MEDIA STATEMENT

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Federal Backpacker Report backs in tourism's seasonal work support call

Peak Tourism body ATIC said aspects of the Parliamentary Report into the Working Holiday Maker Program back industry's call for new and necessary flexibility for backpackers working in tourism.

ATIC Executive Director Simon Westaway said the Report supported first-year backpacker visa holders being able to work in tourism and hospitality in all hard-to-staff rural & remote areas.

"This Report delivers tangible outcomes and if adopted by Government can help address future seasonal work vacancies for many tourism businesses across our regions," Mr Westaway said.

"Tourism and hospitality businesses, particularly within regional and remote Australia, have come to rely on international backpackers for both seasonal work as well as strong visitor spend.

"The Joint Parliamentary Committee has duly recognised the inherent value of backpackers to help fill labour market holes across our visitor economy which existed before and post COVID-19.

"The recommended flexibility for first-year backpackers to work in rural and remote tourism areas as part of their 88 days or 6 months to qualify for a WHM visa extension is positively received.

"Coupled by the idea that backpackers on working holidays may work beyond 6-months for the same tourism and hospitality employer in hard-to-staff areas can help tackle workplace shortages.

"The Committee's position that the Federal Government should increase the working holiday backpacker age limit to 35 through bilateral country negotiations is a logical step forward.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly diminished Australia's international backpacker numbers that only last year generated \$3.1 billion in annual economic value through 200,000 visitors.

"Given the Committee's strong bipartisan findings we now look to an immediate and substantive response from the Federal Government.

"Australia remains the world's leading destination for working holiday makers, so enhancing this valued Migration Program should occur before a future and safe international border reopening."

The Joint Standing Committee on Migration Final Report is here:

https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/download/committees/reportjnt/024567/toc_pdf/FinalReportoftheInquiryintotheWorkingHolidayMakerProgram.pdf;fileType=application%2Fpdf

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