



Working Holiday Maker Program Inquiry Submission
24 July 2020

Endorsed by:



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ABOUT BYTAP

In 2001, The Australian Tourism Export Council (ATEC) established the BackpackerTourism Advisory Panel “BTAP”, later becoming BYTAP with the inclusion of ‘youth’. The panel is the peak national representative body for the Australian inbound backpacker and youth adventure tourism industry with representation from industry in addition to state backpacker associations, such as Adventure Queensland, Adventure Tourism Victoria (ATV) and the Backpacker Operators’ Association of NSW (BOA). BYTAP works closely with Tourism Australia and various national, state and regional tourism peak bodies to elevate the profile of youth tourism.

The role of BYTAP is to:

- Act as the critical link between the backpacker and youth adventure industry, the states and territories and federal government in the interpretation of segment-specific issues;
- Represent the interests of the backpacker segment to other industry organisations, government and the community on a national level;
- Facilitate an active and effective policy forum where key industry stakeholders present issues for development and action;
- Raise the profile of the backpacker and youth adventure tourism sector;
- Lead the way in the on-going development of growth strategies to maximise the contribution of the backpacker and youth adventure market to Australia.

Goals

With regard to the Working Holiday Maker (WHM) Program in 2020 and beyond, BYTAPs goals are to:

1. Retain the WHM Program for international youth to retain reciprocal opportunities for young Australians in over 40 countries.
2. Regain Australia’s competitiveness as a sustainable and attractive working holiday destination.
3. Simplify WHM visa conditions and communication to reduce administration complexity for travellers, visa administrators, employers and tourism providers, and increase length of stay, tourism spend and return for the Australian economy.
4. Restart inbound youth tourism responsibly, while protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of Australian businesses and their staff, travellers and the Australian public.
5. Ensure that WHM visas meet the changing needs of youth travel.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Working Holiday Maker Program is a critical enabler for young people to visit, study and work to fund their travels in Australia. Working Holiday Makers (WHMs) are a high yield market. They spend more, stay longer and disperse more widely throughout Australia than most other travellers.

WHMs create jobs for Australians by spending in regional areas where they work and travel. They provide a valuable, mobile seasonal labour force, critical for regional farm work and bushfire recovery efforts and other high demand roles in regional areas where jobs remain unfilled by Australians.

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on WHMs, and the industries reliant on them, with the majority of WHMs unable to fulfil the full value of their visa, either having to return home early or unable to arrive due to travel restrictions. Once international travel resumes, WHMs should be a key focus for inbound tourism rejuvenation. They are resilient and will be more willing to return as international borders open. This cohort is less likely to be deterred by mandatory COVID-19 quarantine when staying 12 months compared to other international travellers.

Recommendations in brief

1. Support WHMs still in Australia to extend their visa at no charge so they may stay, travel and work in critical jobs, which cannot be filled by Australians.
2. Enable granted WHM visa holders who were unable to enter Australia or who left early due to COVID-19 the ability to reactivate their visa without charge from the time borders reopen with their home country.
3. Support the restart of the WHM Program with critical visa reform to rejuvenate regional communities and tourism spend from this high yield cohort, including:
 - a. restarting WHM visa processing;
 - b. freezing visa costs for 5 years;
 - c. increasing the eligible age to 35 for all WHM source countries;
 - d. tripling visa caps;
 - e. simplifying visa conditions on eligible work days towards gaining a second or third year visa;
 - f. extending eligible work options towards a second or third year visa on an ongoing basis across regional Australia, including volunteer work in disaster/crisis zones; and
 - g. providing additional funding for 3 years to Tourism Australia for marketing campaigns to target WHMs in key source countries and support the restart of the WHM Program.
4. Establish a COVIDSafeCorridor for WHM entry utilising BYTAP's 3 step framework.
5. Future proof the WHM Program with less restrictive, more open policies.

COMMENTS ON THE INQUIRY TERMS OF REFERENCE

Working Holiday Maker Program background

The Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program enables young travellers (generally 18-30 years old) from 44 countries the ability to stay in Australia for up to 12 months to travel, work and study temporarily. The majority of WHMs (82% at December 2019) were in Australia on a *Working Holiday* visa (subclass 417), with the remaining 18% on a *Work & Holiday* visa (subclass 462). Each year approximately 200,000 young people come to Australia or extend their stay here under the Program.

Reciprocal agreements for Working Holiday arrangements are available for young Australians in 43 countries (the only exclusion being China).

For the year ended 31st December 2019, WHMs made up only 8% of all temporary work visas (excluding bridging, crew/transit visas) bringing just over 141,142 WHM visa holders to Australia with the majority of travellers coming from the UK, France, Germany, South Korea and Taiwan.¹

The WHM program saw a significant growth of 16% year on year from 2010 to 2012, however when visa fees were increased by 30.4% in 2013/14, WHM visa grants dropped by almost 20% over the past 6 years.² The impact of tax increases and increased competition from other working holiday destinations, with more flexible and affordable visas (such as Canada and New Zealand) have also reduced Australia's competitiveness and volume of visa applications.

In 2018, the age limit was increased to 35 years old for some countries, which was a welcome extension for [Canadian, Irish](#) and [French](#) citizens, and reflected changes in reciprocal agreements for Australians. Research undertaken by Monash University has shown that older WHMs spend more money in Australia than those under 25 years, and the tourism sector has for many years called for an extension of the age limit for other countries as part of past WHM reform inquiries.³

The WHM visa can be extended for up to 3 years if a visa holder undertakes 'specified work' in mandated regional areas for a period of 3 months (88 days) in their first year, and 6 months (176 days) in their second year. In the last 3 years, on average, 23% of travellers took up the 2nd year visa option, with only 0.127% extending to a 3rd year (the latter option having only been available since July 2019).

Restrictions exist for the duration of study (4 months) and work (currently 6 months with one employer in each location). Work restriction time limits are lifted for au pairs and work in

¹ Data.gov.au BP0019 [Number of Temporary visa holders in Australia at 31 March 2020](#) pivot table

² Refer Appendix 1 - Department of Home Affairs. Data updated via [YHA Australia submission to the inquiry Working Holiday Maker Reform package](#)

³ BYTE: [WHV research preliminary results](#) September 2015.

Northern Australia in aged and disability care; agriculture, forestry and fishing; construction and mining. For visa subclass 462 holders, tourism and hospitality work in Northern Australia is allowed to count towards the '88 days' work towards a second year visa (double that for a third year visa).

Limits exist on the number of WHM visas issued per year for certain eligible countries under the 462 visa. In July 2019, the visa quotas were increased for WHMs across 8 countries. New WHM arrangements also commenced with Greece and Ecuador (capped at 500 and 100 places each year respectively).

In early 2020, volunteer or paid work for up to 12 months in bushfire recovery efforts was added to eligible work towards a 2nd or 3rd year visa, to provide much-needed assistance to rebuild and rejuvenate regional areas impacted by bushfires. Similarly, recent extensions of visas and easing of 6 month limits to one employer in each location across Australia for WHMs working in agriculture or food processing has been welcomed by the agricultural sector.⁴

The [WHM parliamentary guide](#) provides further details and an in-depth history of the program.

Youth work and travel motivation

According to the World Youth Student & Educational (WYSE) Travel Confederation, the main driver for WHMs is the desire for cultural experiences abroad. Young people travel as a means of personal and professional development - to explore the world, meet new people, learn new skills, to experience everyday life in another country and build their CVs. Thus, much of youth travel is 'purposeful travel' and not (just) a holiday.⁵

The youth market (15-29 years) is a resilient group of travellers. In a 2018 study by WYSE Travel Confederation, nearly 80% of respondents considered that a health epidemic had no influence on their travel plans, and less than 5% of participants indicated that they had delayed their travel as a result of such factors.⁶ More recent research conducted by the British Education Travel Association (BETA) in March 2020 indicated that UK youth are looking to travel to countries which are better developed and that have handled the COVID-19 crisis well.⁷

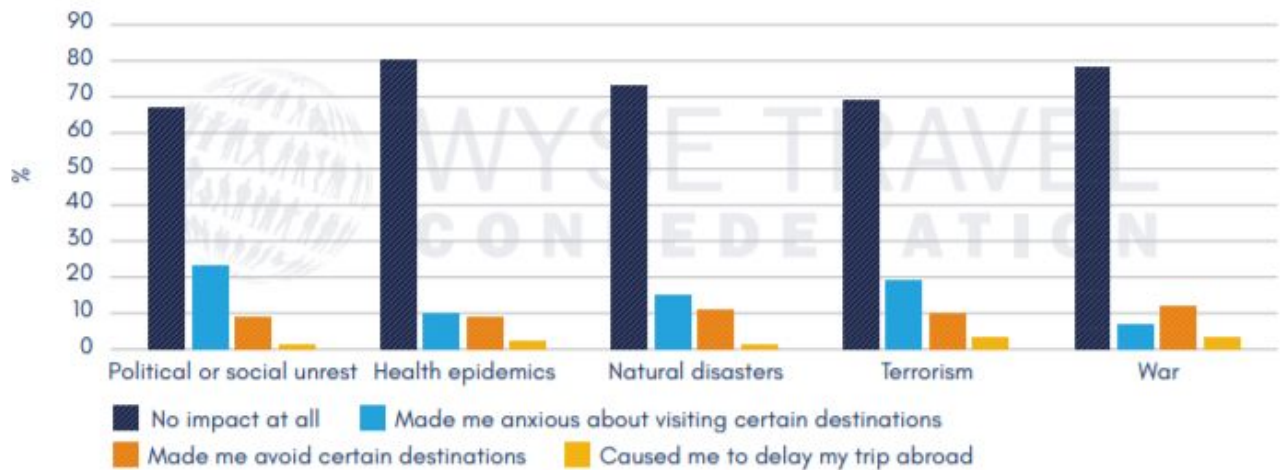
⁴ [AUSVEG media release](#) 4 April 2020

⁵ WYSE Travel Confederation 'New Horizons IV: A global study of the youth and student traveller.' July 2018

⁶ WYSE Travel Confederation, [New Horizons IV: Work Experience Travel](#), December 2018

⁷ [BETA What Really Matters](#), Tracking the motivators towards travel among young people throughout the COVID-19 crisis. March 2020.

Impact of adverse events on travel plans



Source: WYSE Travel Confederation

Young travelers are also historically willing to travel even when the economy is weak. As soon as borders open and accessibility to cost effective flights resume, young people historically take advantage of savings or redundancy money to explore the world and gain work experience until job prospects improve in their home country.

Value of the WHM program to Australia's economy

\$3.2b tourism receipts

WHM arrivals represent an important sector for Australia's visitor economy worth \$3.2 billion, delivering more than 200,000 young travellers to Australia each year.⁸

WHMs can undertake temporary work, which funds their travels. As a visa requirement, each one has to show evidence of a minimum of \$5,000 in funds to support themselves during the initial stages of their stay in Australia. In reality, each one spends double that - a total of \$10,400 - compared to \$687 per trip that Australians spend domestically per trip.⁹

WHMs are Australia's 9th largest visitor market for YE Dec 2019⁸. They are an important segment and influencer of the youth market (travellers aged 15-29 years), which contributes 27% of all visitor arrivals to Australia and 45% of all visitor spend, bringing \$19.5 billion for the year ending December 2018 to the visitor economy injecting money into the tourism, retail, transport, arts/cultural, education and hospitality sectors.¹⁰

Monash University researcher Dr. Jeff Jarvis has stressed the importance of the visa program, with his research into WHMs, which showed they stayed on average 326 days in Australia, spending just over AUD 90 per day on average with hostels, restaurants/cafes and supermarkets being the primary beneficiaries. "This confirms that attracting WHMs to base themselves in a particular urban destination brings with it significant economic benefits."¹¹

Cultural exchange

The WHM program facilitates an important cultural exchange program, enabling visitors to experience life in Australia. In a survey conducted of over 2,300 WHMs in Australia by Adventure Tourism Victoria (ATV) in July 2020, 93% indicated they wanted to stay longer at the end of their visa, with 63% of these travellers advising they would continue to travel and work in Australia.

“

With such uncertainty around the globe, promoting cultural exchange has never been so important. Encouraging young people to travel breaks down prejudices and facilitates cultural understanding and makes for a brighter future for all of us.

Lets not forget that among these travellers are our next generation of leaders and decision makers.”

”

Wendi Aylward, Managing Director, AIFS (Australia), Sydney NSW

⁸ International Visitors Survey (IVS) YE March 2020 Tourism Research Australia

⁹ [Tourism Australia Working Holiday Fact Sheet](#); [Tourism Research Australia National Visitor Survey December 2019](#); International Visitors Survey (IVS) YE March 2020 Tourism Research Australia

¹⁰ [Tourism Research Australia National Visitor Survey December 2019](#); [distribution of Tourism Businesses ending June 2018](#); [Tourism Australia Working Holiday Fact Sheet](#).

¹¹ BYTE: [WHV research preliminary results](#) September 2015.

Monash University researcher Dr. Jeff Jarvis' research confirms WHMs act as triggers to stimulate additional Visiting Friends & Relatives (VFR) visitation in the same way as international students (with 47% generating visits from friends and relatives). They also play a role as brand ambassadors for Australia with 79% of WHMs encouraging friends to come on a WHM visa and 51% of WHMs returning to Australia.¹²

Creating jobs for Australians

WHMs create employment through their spending, particularly in regional areas and in the hospitality, tourism, retail, consumer goods and education sectors.

Flinders University research has found that the WHM Program is a net creator of employment of Australians, with 5 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) jobs created by every 100 WHMs.¹³

WHMs also generate income into the education sector, contributing around 4.4% of total international student visas and enrolments.¹⁴ Many WHMs also contribute to the vocational and language education sector, including completing Responsible Service of Alcohol (RSA), construction induction (white/green card) and English language certifications.

“

Many regional towns like Maffra, backpackers actually create employment with the hostels, shops, bars and the likes put on workers to service their needs.

”

Peter McMahon, Cambrai Backpackers Hostel, Maffra VIC

Fills critical labour shortages

The WHM Program was created, and operates, with tourism and cultural exchange as the primary objectives, with any temporary work seen as subsidiary, to enable WHMs to travel and experience life in Australia, spending their hard-earned income in local communities.

The National Institute of Labour Studies evaluation noted that ‘the WHM (program) is more a tourism export program than a labour supply program.’¹⁵

¹² International Visitors Survey (IVS) YE March 2020 Tourism Research Australia; BYTE: [WHV research preliminary results](#) September 2015.

¹³ Tan, Y., & Lester, L. (2012). [Labour Market and Economic Impacts of International Working Holiday Temporary Migrants to Australia: Population Space and Place 18\(3\) 359-383](#).

¹⁴ Yan Tan et al, ‘Evaluation of Australia's Working Holiday Maker (WHM) Program’ Flinders University (2009).<https://thepienews.com/news/australia-dibp-stats-reveal-impact-of-working-holiday-visas-on-education-exports/>

¹⁵ Adam Steen, Victoria Peel (2015) [Economic and Social Consequences of Changing Taxation Requirements to Working Holiday Makers](#).

The WHM Program addresses critical labour shortages of skilled and unskilled work for agricultural and tourism sectors in regional areas, which historically are unable to be filled by Australians, even with incentives.¹⁶

82% of WHMs work whilst they are in Australia, with most working in hospitality, farm work, construction and childcare.¹⁷

WHMs demonstrate significant flexibility and ability to disperse widely with short notice into regional areas for short term and seasonal work. A 2001 University of Melbourne study found that WHMs are more available for low skilled labour compared to “local unemployed youth (who) do not hold a strong interest in these jobs and are not as prepared to relocate for employment as the WHMs”, and typical WHMs are prepared to undertake jobs that are disproportionately low skilled despite

“

Not only do the backpackers fill the gap in these short term jobs, leaving the money earn but on returning home act as ambassadors for our tourism industry and the produce they have worked on.

”

Peter McMahon, Cambrai Backpackers Hostel, Maffra VIC

their education level or past work experience. Importantly, this study calculated that if the WHM visas did not exist and the supply of WHM labour was withdrawn (assumed to be 80,000 at the time of the study), there would be 40,909 more casual full year jobs, but only an estimated 24% of these jobs would be taken by unemployed youth. This calculation does not take account of the jobs generated by WHMs spending.¹⁸

“Results from the survey reported in Harding and Webster suggest that only a minority of WHMs have advantages over local youth. Some employers, for example, believed that WHMs were more motivated than local youth while 14 percent of employers surveyed needed workers who could speak a foreign language. Generally, employers surveyed did not regard WHMs as more skilled despite being more qualified on average. Neither did they believe the WHMs to be more honest, better spoken or harder working.”¹⁹

Many regional and metro tourism employers reflect that many Australian residents show a reluctance to relocate to undertake regional work due to family or study commitments, and are unmotivated to take up low skilled or low paid work where government benefits may subsidise their income instead.

¹⁶ [Seasonal Workers Incentives Trial 2019](#); Appendix IV - 3. ABC Triple J Hack - 26 June 2020

¹⁷ [Tourism Australia Working Holiday Fact Sheet](#)

¹⁸ Harding, Webster (2001) [The Working Holiday Maker Scheme and the Australian Labour Market](#)

¹⁹ Adam Steen, Victoria Peel (2015) [Economic and Social Consequences of Changing Taxation Requirements to Working Holiday Makers](#).

Income from visa fees and taxes

Appendix II estimates that the revenue earned from WHM visa fees is over \$80M since 2010, excluding revenue from passenger movement charges or taxation. However, this revenue has been steadily declining since 2010 despite an increase in the visa fee by up to 30%.

Various papers have been created discussing the income and taxation of WHMs from the [2016 inquiry in the Working Holiday Maker Reform Package](#).

Impact of COVID-19

According to Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF) estimates, forward bookings from international tourism to Australia have dropped 45% from January to June 2020 compared to last year.²⁰ WHM visas granted in the first quarter of 2020 (January - March) were down 15% (21, 877 visas) compared to the same period in the previous year.²¹

On 31 December 2019, there were 141,142 Working Holiday visa holders in Australia.²² As of July 2020, BYTAP estimates that approximately 80,000 WHMs remain in Australia. Based on statistics gathered from WHMs currently in Australia by Adventure Tourism Victoria, the number of WHMs who intend to stay in Australia will drop significantly, with only 20% of WHMs anticipated to be left in Australia by January 2021.²³



Source: BYTAP estimate²⁴

²⁰ [Tourism Transport Forum Estimated Impact of Coronavirus on the Australian Visitor Economy](#)

²¹ Department of Home Affairs [Temporary Entrants visa holders at 31 March 2020](#).

²² Department of Home Affairs [Working Holiday Maker Visa Program Report – December 2019](#)

²³ Department of Home Affairs [Working Holiday Maker Visa Program Report – December 2019; COVID-19 pandemic leads to 50 000 fewer backpackers in Australia prompting parliamentary inquiry](#); Adventure Tourism Victoria WHM Survey July 2020.

Tourism economy losses

Scenario planning by the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) suggests a protracted international tourism recovery, with up to 78% drop in international tourist arrivals if travel restrictions are not lifted until December 2020.²⁴

Off the back of travel restrictions imposed during COVID-19, the Australian tourism industry is facing a prolonged recovery, with average losses in total tourism receipts from all inbound markets of \$2b per month and up to \$5.3b impact of lost wages to the broader economy and up to \$1.59b lost PAYG tax contributions, with Australian jobs in up to 302,000 tourism businesses at risk.²⁵

The Tourism & Transport Forum (TTF) expects challenges will exist to fill the estimated 20% of tourism jobs lost as workers migrate into more stable employment outside of the tourism industry.

Due to the long term impact of COVID-19, it is expected that future statistics will indicate a significant drop in overall WHM length of stay, dispersal rates, overall spend for 2020/21 and value to the Australian economy. Further research is required to forecast the expected economic impact specifically attributed to the loss of WHMs.

Impact on travellers and WHMs

International travel restrictions imposed by COVID-19 forced many WHMs in Australia to return home early in February and March 2020 following government recommendations. Others abandoned their stays as jobs were lost and they were unable to travel to find work or to travel for leisure to other parts of Australia as domestic travel restrictions were imposed.²⁶

For travellers who left Australia early, their unused visa costs cannot be reimbursed, and despite the ability to re-enter Australia until the visa expires, it's unlikely there will be time to return following the protracted delay expected to reopen Australian borders. Even if they could return, there would not be enough time left to be able to work the required number of days in an eligible role to be able to apply for a 2nd year visa extension.

“

Because of COVID-19, we had no chance but to stay in/around the same area and work. So we did not have the opportunity to see as much as we would have liked to. We would really love to enjoy more of Australia (and) contribute more to the country by way of working where Working Holiday Makers are needed.

”

Adventure Tourism Victoria Survey, WHMs in Australia, July 2020.

²⁴ UNWTO World Tourism Barometer May 2020 - Special focus on the Impact of COVID-19 ([Summary](#)); UNWTO [International Tourism and COVID-19](#)

²⁵ [Tourism Transport Forum Estimated Impact of Coronavirus on the Australian Visitor Economy; Tourism Research Australia - Tourism Businesses in Australia June 2018.](#)

²⁶ City Hub Sydney May 2020 [Downunder backpackers in COVID limbo](#)

For those WHMs who have stayed in Australia, many have indicated they have found it increasingly difficult to find or retain work, particularly in regional areas and they have lost valuable travel time as borders closed between states.²⁷ With only their savings to prop them up, some have been forced to rely on friends, family and charity.²⁸

In an Adventure Tourism Victoria survey of WHMs in Australia in July 2020, COVID-19 has exacerbated concerns about the ability for travellers to fulfill the required 88 days of farmwork to be eligible for the second year WHM visa, particularly as Australians are prioritised over WHMs for eligible farmwork.

On a positive note, some WHMs have stayed in Australia, citing their belief that Australia remains a safer option as a place to stay compared to their home country's current COVID-19 risk, and to continue their travels.

“

I started applying for hospitality jobs in January, most of them weren't hiring because of the bushfires, then corona came and it was impossible again.

Finishing the 88 days and finding a job has been really difficult because of Covid!

”

Adventure Tourism Victoria Survey, WHMs in Australia, July 2020.

However, for those [visa holders unable to enter Australia](#) due to COVID-19, their prospects and dreams to start their working holiday are uncertain.²⁹ Similarly those who are close to the age limit face frustrating losses of their WHM visa investment and opportunity.

Once international borders reopen, it is expected WHMs and youth will be one of the first tourism markets to bounce back, as they are traditionally a resilient market. Figures from the WYSE Youth Travel Industry Monitor of 2009 and 2010 indicated that, although the youth travel sector was affected by the Global Financial Crisis, it had declined less and recovered faster than mainstream tourism.³⁰

For UK travellers - Australia's largest WHM source market - recent research conducted by BUNAC in March 2020 indicated that UK youth are looking to travel to countries which have well developed medical and travel infrastructure and that have handled the COVID-19 crisis well.³¹

For WHMs a mandatory 14 day quarantine is little deterrent to a 12 month intended stay. However, the significant cost of current quarantine measures will deter those unless more affordable options for secure, COVID-safe hostel or budget accommodation is endorsed by State governments and health authorities.

²⁷ Adventure Tourism Victoria WHM Survey July 2020.

²⁸ BYTE: [Migrant workers call for coronavirus support amid fears of crisis situation](#) July 2020; BYTE: various [WHV articles](#)

²⁹ [BYTAP WHM insights June 2020](#)

³⁰ WYSE Travel Confederation [Facts and Stats](#)

³¹ [BETA What Really Matters](#). Tracking the motivators towards travel among young people throughout the COVID-19 crisis. March 2020.

Economic impact & recovery of regional economies

WHMs stay longer in regional Australia than other international visitors, with 36% of nights spent in regional areas (compared to 19% of all international travellers), bringing 416,000 visitors and \$946M into regional economies for the year ending December 2019.³² They also disperse further across Australia, with 42% of WHMs visiting 3-7 locations, and 22% visiting more than 8 locations.³³

Regional agricultural and tourism-related employers have cited, in consultation with BYTAP, various issues with Australians filling jobs, which include:

- local workers' preference to work in the mines
- a shortage of agricultural and rural skills required for the role
- seasonality of work
- short duration/infrequent work
- mobility required to travel to the work available.

Appendix IV provides examples of the impact of COVID-19 and the resulting scarcity of WHMs in regional communities in certain key sectors, which are also described below.

Seasonal farm work

In July 2020, the agricultural sector estimated there were at least 40,000 fewer backpackers working here and expressed concerns over WHM shortages, with international travel unlikely to resume before the Australian summer and peak harvest season.³⁴

WHMs are still in demand during the COVID-19 crisis despite early interest in farmwork from Australians who had

“

It will most likely be the Vintage/Summer season 2021 (grapes) that will be greatly impacted by staff shortages. Normally we see over 1000 extra backpackers/seasonal workers employed across the Griffith area. If we are unable to get WHMs we expect a shortfall of around 750+ workers which will have a direct impact on our local businesses including my own.

”

Cesar Cabrera, Managing Director, Mapuche Australia PTY LTD, NSW

³² [Tourism Research Australia: International Visitors Survey December 2019](#)

³³ [Tourism Australia Working Holiday Fact Sheet](#)

³⁴ [Nation's bounty 'to wither on the vine' without more seasonal workers COVID-easing](#) The Australian, 20 July 2020

been stood down or lost their jobs due to the coronavirus pandemic; farmers say those applications quickly dried up.³⁵

Regional businesses reliant on backpackers and seasonal workers, like Caesar Cabrera, a labour contractor and hostel owner in Griffith, NSW, will be one of those most impacted by the lack of available, flexible workers in the foreseeable future (see quote), which not will not only impact small regional businesses like his, but the surrounding local community.

Au pairs for essential worker families

In a recent Cultural Au Pair Association of Australia (CAPAA) survey, answered by over 391 Australian families, over 85% stated they would find it very difficult or unable to access alternative live-in childcare if international au pairs cannot come to Australia until 2021. Nearly 30% of these families are located in regional Australia.

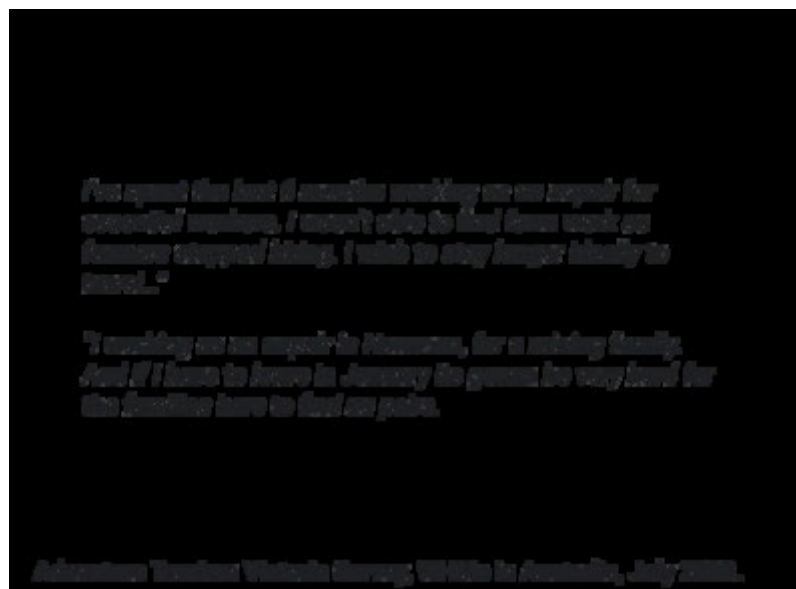
Of those families, over 81% have one or both parents as essential workers, where they work in shifts (33%), and/or have no other family support (66%) and so access to alternative childcare options are limited. Nearly 30% advised without international au pairs they felt they could not access alternative live-in childcare in the interim until borders re-open or a 'secure corridor' is established. The majority of parents (97%) also indicated their willingness to support a mandated quarantine for international au pairs and nearly 90% were willing to subsidise these quarantine costs of at least \$500 (45%) or up to \$1000 (26%).³⁶

Regional tourism operators

The impact of COVID-19 for regional tourism operators in particular has been devastating.

When international borders shut, operators reliant on inbound tourists and WHMs regularly reported 100% cancellation of forward bookings and refunds on months of existing bookings, reducing income to zero.

WHMs are a valuable, stable income for regional tourism businesses, providing



“

We are an Inbound Tour Operator, family-owned business, based in Cairns. Up until early March we were having the best year ever and then it all came crashing down when International borders shut due to COVID19. Our business employs 4 staff and has 4 regular, contractor-guides. All guides lost their work and income without notice.

”

Konrad Borowiecki, No Limit Adventures, Cairns, QLD

³⁵ ["Backpacker numbers plummet in wake of coronavirus" The Weekly Times 21 May 2020](#)

³⁶ [Cultural Au Pair Association of Australia](#) survey results, June 29, 2020.

‘bums on seats’ and ‘bodies in beds’. Domestic or trans-Tasman tourism rarely fills the gap for many tourism businesses, particularly regional tour operators and hostels.

The JobKeeper program has been critical to these tourism business’ survival, providing much needed support and connection with their staff.

“

The virus caused the business to completely shutdown at the end of March, we've had to let go of all of our (6) tour guide casuals and just kept on one full timer and myself. A trans Tasman bubble will not do much to help us. I would like to see existing working holiday and work & holiday visas extended free of charge and the visa fee for new applications waived.

Greg Price, Jump Tours Pty Ltd, Cambridge, TAS

”

Bushfire recovery

WHMs and backpackers have been a valuable source of assistance to help regional communities rejuvenate after the 2019/20 summer bushfires.

In July 2020, [Blazeaid](#), a volunteer organisation dedicated to helping communities rebuild after natural disasters, identified “backpackers (as) an essential part of our operation” and they are “finding it hard to get Australians ... whether grey nomads or unemployed” to assist their recovery efforts.³⁷

“

‘Backpackers are an essential part of our operation. ... We are finding it hard to get Australians ... to help Blazeaid in enough numbers.’

”

Debbie Buttler, BlazeAid, VIC

³⁷ Blazeaid letter dated 7 July 2020 (Appendix I) <https://blazeaid.com.au/>

Visa criteria and conditions reform

In the past five years, the total number of WHM visas issued has fallen as visa fees have increased and many WHMs began to be taxed higher on their earnings and superannuation (as shown in Appendix II).³⁸ The tourism, hospitality and agricultural sectors, and many travellers, opposed the amendments to tax rates, citing that this loss of income for workers would put jobs at risk with travellers preferring to reduce their length of stay or choose another country as their working holiday destination.³⁹

Reform is required to maintain Australia as a competitive working holiday destination to maintain and grow bilateral relationships with source countries, and to support the tourism economy reliant on these long duration, high yielding youth travellers and other critical sections of industry in need of a flexible, mobile workforce, surplus to jobs filled by Australians.

BYTAP supports the following visa reforms, which are also itemised in detail in the recommendations of this paper:

1. Higher WHM age limits bring more travellers & aligning to youth trends

The ages of 18-35 years is a generally accepted demographic for youth tourism, recognised globally by many tourism organisations such as [Contiki](#).

Initial extrapolations based on research from Tourism Research Australia (TRA) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) predict that raising the age limit from 30-35 for more WHMs would capture a larger share of visitors for Australia, without impacting existing visitor numbers from this cohort. Initial estimates predict that such an age increase would generate an extra 82,000 visitors and \$817 million for the Australian economy from the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy alone.⁴⁰

By raising the age limit to 35 for all source countries, the WHM program would capitalise on youth trends to delay ‘adulthood’ or major life decisions such as marriage, parenthood and home ownership, in lieu of travel and overseas work experiences to further their careers and aspirations. For example, in the UK, the largest WHM source market, the average age for marriage is currently 35.5 years for women and 37.9 for men.⁴¹

³⁸ WYSE Travel Confederation ‘New Horizons IV: A global study of the youth and student traveller.’ July 2018; Department of Home Affairs Working Holiday Maker visas granted 2019-20; [Parliamentary Research Papers 2016-17](#)

³⁹ [Vegetable Growers oppose Working Holiday Visa extensions for tourism industry work; https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/sitecollectiondocuments/ag-food/working-holiday/submissions/free-text-submissions.pdf](https://www.agriculture.gov.au/sites/default/files/sitecollectiondocuments/ag-food/working-holiday/submissions/free-text-submissions.pdf)

⁴⁰ International Visitors Survey (IVS) YE March 2020 [Tourism Research Australia](#) and [Overseas Arrivals and Departures Australia May 2020](#) Australian Bureau of Statistics

⁴¹ [Office for National Statistics. Marriage in England and Wales 2016](#)

Taking a gap year before tertiary education is now being augmented with sabbaticals from early to mid career in many of the WHM source countries (e.g UK, USA, Canada). Many WHMs are also location-independent, country-hopping ‘digital nomads’ who follow the seasons or take advantage of WHM programs to ‘live locally’ in different countries. A longer age bracket extends options to these travellers to return and explore Australia further.

Older travellers are also more likely to be financially able to afford long-haul travel, unburdened of their student debt, and free to take off on a ‘grown up gap year’, Monash University researcher Dr. Jeff Jarvis has found, too, that older WHMs spend significantly more per visit than those under 25.”⁴².

In consultation with state backpacker associations and youth tourism operators, BYTAP understands there is significant consumer concern and pent up demand for travellers who would benefit from extending the WHM visa age to 35, held by both travellers who have already been unable to enter due to COVID-19 travel restrictions; have had their WHM trip cut short and had to leave Australia early, or for others unable to apply for a WHM visa until travel restrictions ease.

Many [WHMs already granted a WHV during COVID-19](#) will be ineligible to enter or reapply for another visa unless reforms are considered, even on a temporary basis. Over 130 visa holders approached by BYTAP have reinforced this pent up demand, asking for government leniency in light of COVID-19 restrictions.

BYTAP supports an extension of the visa age limit, particularly for impacted existing visa holders, which would also have positive benefits for the tourism industry to maintain strong relationships with various trade partners.



WHM's unable to take up visa's due to COVID

2. Hold visa fees and increase visa caps

Visa quotas on certain 462 visas provide barriers for some source countries, which are consistently oversubscribed. Despite an extension of certain visa limits, the current quotas in some countries (which can be as low as 100) have been a disincentive to travel agents overseas to market Australia as a youth destination. Those that choose to do so balance the costs of marketing and recruitment with the risk that the visa quota will be quickly reached.

BYTAP supports the extension of visa caps to provide more opportunities for a culturally diverse program, and to increase the number of visa grants and visa income from these source countries.

⁴² BYTE: [WHV research preliminary results](#), September 2015.

BYTAP also supports capping WHM visa fees for at least 5 years and offering subsidies or fee-free options to restart the WHM program once international borders reopen, particularly for WHMs granted visas who were adversely impacted by COVID-19.

BYTAP also supports continued funding for Tourism Australia to focus promotional activities in international source markets to maintain Australia's position as an attractive working holiday destination.

3. Reduce complexity of 2nd and 3rd year visa conditions

Through consultation with the tourism industry and travellers, BYTAP understands WHMs are consistently challenged to maintain the minimum 3 month ('88 days') regional farm work criteria in the first year, and 6 months ('176 days') in the second year, due to seasonality gaps in availability and consistency of work to meet the complex regional restrictions for eligible work. Travellers report having to work for significantly longer than these minimum requirements to be able to demonstrate eligible days of work, thus reducing available travel time and tourism receipts throughout their duration of stay.

There is also significant confusion and lack of clear information about the definition of a standard day of work for each industry, which can result in discrepancies in second and third year visa grants between travellers with the same number of standard work days. Similarly the calculation of a 'standard day', also causes discrepancies and inequality in the number of hours worked for many WHMs for the same visa extension.

The low take up rate (0.127%) of the third year working holiday visa also signals an opportunity for reform, with travellers and tourism operators indicating the 6 month minimum requirement in an eligible job during the second year a barrier to a third year application, depressing potential WHM tourism receipts and spend in regional Australia.

With the success of allowing hospitality and tourism work in Northern Australia to count towards the "88 days" for 462 visa holders, the extension of this to include hospitality and tourism across regional Australia would support many businesses that find it difficult to attract remote labor. The basis of the WHM program is one of cultural exchange, and experiences such as working in remote locations across all of regional Australia add to the program's attraction, as well as providing a sustainable labour source for businesses to succeed in otherwise restrictive labor supply locations.

BYTAP supports reforms to the WHM program to simplify these complex visa conditions and make eligible work more accessible across all regions of Australia as outlined in the following recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Immediate priorities

1. Support WHMs still in country to remain

- a. Enable 417 and 462 visa holders to lodge an application for a free of charge new visa or visa extension should they wish to remain in Australia.
- b. Offer a streamlined and simplified process of granting these extensions, with consideration for WHMs inability to disperse for eligible work due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.
- c. Enable older visa holders, who fall over the age limit of 30 or 35 (depending on which source country), a visa extension.

2. Enable granted WHMs the opportunity to use their visa

- a. Waive visa fees and/or enable an automatic visa extension for WHMs who left early and were unable to finish their visa due to COVID-19 or could not activate a granted second or third year visa.
- b. Waive visa fees to enable an automatic extension of the effective date for travellers issued with WHM visas but who were unable to enter Australia due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. Effective dates could be reset for these visa holders from when international borders with that country and Australia re-open.
- c. Consider pandemics and associated government travel bans as compassionate grounds for a pro-rata visa credit or refunds of unused visas.

3. Support the restart of the WHM program with critical visa reform

- a. Restart WHM visa processing.
- b. Establish a freeze on all WHM visa costs for 5 years.
- c. Increase age limits across all source countries to 35 years.
- d. Waive visa fees for returning WHMs to enable a second WHM visa after 12 months outside of Australia.
- e. Triple the caps in place on 462 visas for all WHM countries (and so providing visas to meet demand) from the time borders reopen, excluding USA residents where current demand is met.
- f. Simplify conditions for second and third year visa applications for eligible work, changing a 'standard day' to an agreed number of hours worked. i.e. for the second year visa, move from 88 days to 500 hours with a registered employer, which can be tracked by the ATO.
- g. Enable WHMs to work an additional six months with one employer if they work in the following high demand and critical sectors in any part of regional Australia (i.e extending beyond Northern Australia), which are unable to be filled by Australians:

- i. agriculture, forestry and fishing
 - ii. tourism and hospitality
 - iii. mining and construction
 - iv. childcare/au pair
 - v. health care, disability care and aged care (similar to the current relaxation of work hours for international students).⁴³
- h. Continue enabling WHMs the ability to work in disaster or crisis management as volunteers for registered charities and not-for profits such as BlazeAid, Red Cross, Salvation Army - and have this recognised as eligible work.
- i. Provide funding for Tourism Australia to offer a 12 month promotional subsidy to core source 417 and US residents for 12 months after borders reopen to kick-start WHM arrivals and visa applications. i.e. fee-free or significantly subsidised for new visas issued.
- j. Renew additional funding for Tourism Australia to focus for 3 years (2021-2023) to target WHMs.
- k. Provide resourcing to improve Government information for WHMs on eligible work, hours required for visa extensions and registered employers by region.

4. Establish a COVIDSafe Corridor for WHM entry

- a. Establish a COVID-Safe Corridor to enable WHMs entry under a phased pilot program. See Appendix V for the BYTAP and National Farmers Federation recommended framework to safely restart the WHM program.
- b. Offer cost-neutral or more affordable secure quarantine options, with subsidies.

Future proofing WHVs

5. Less restrictive, more open WHM policies

- a. Continue bilateral negotiations targeting new countries to incorporate into the WHM program, prioritising those which will deliver most value to the tourism industry, including Switzerland, Brazil and Mexico.
- b. Enable WHMs to automatically extend their stay onto a 3 month tourist visa without leaving the country first.
- c. Reduction of the Working Holiday Maker (WHM) visa fee to \$315 or less (i.e. back to 2012 level indexed as a minimum) rather than the current \$485.
- d. Resolving of uncertainty around income tax payable by WHMs.
- e. Removal of the additional tax imposed on superannuation of WHMs (65% instead of 15% for Australians).
- f. Resourcing measures to increase compliance and to reduce wage theft and unfair employment conditions – e.g. licensing of labour hire contractors.

⁴³ Department of Home Affairs (May 2020) [Temporary relaxation of working hours for student visa holders](#)

Ongoing support for tourism businesses

Whilst continued support for WHM programs is an important long term goal, Australian businesses reliant on WHMs and other international tourists will need ongoing support to survive in the meantime.

BYTAP applauds the extension to the JobKeeper program to 31 March 2021 and supports future iterations of the program to retain jobs for Australians, particularly for employers within the tourism sector and in specific regions who face a significant fall in turnover.

BYTAP supports the extension of government financial support packages to ensure tourism and other small businesses remain operational, including interest free loans to support their immediate cash flow and meet fixed costs, and State land rent waivers and other fees and charges. Support should also be provided to incorporate non-traditional debt financing solutions and assistance to transition to new business models.⁴⁴ This is particularly critical for the youth tourism sector which already operates on slim margins, and in highly seasonal businesses.

“

In my opinion it is imperative that the federal government extends the Job Keeper payments to these businesses that traditionally market to the International market as it is these businesses that will inspire the much needed export earnings Australia will need on the other side of this pandemic.

An implementation of a revised Export Market Development Grant for the next 3 years for everyone investing in the international space whether they have used it or not. This along with the extension of the Job Keeper payment will give businesses the confidence to push through the next months.

”

Dallas Coull, Taste the Barossa | See Adelaide & Beyond | Great Ocean Road & Beyond, SA

⁴⁴ [OECD Forum - Rescuing SMEs from the COVID storm: What's next?; Financing SMEs and Entrepreneurs 2020 An OECD Scoreboard](#)

With the reopening of Australian borders, BYTAP also supports the extension of Export Market Development Grants (EMDG) to provide inbound tourism businesses funds to invest in international marketing efforts.

BYTAP supports the establishment of programs to deliver advice and support to pivot businesses towards domestic tourism, diversification and/or innovation.

BYTAP also supports the sustainable resumption of the tourism industry following the WHO guidelines for the recovery of the tourism sector⁴⁵, which includes:

1. Focus on micro to medium tourism enterprises

Channelling long-term support to small and medium enterprises, including targeted support beyond initial relief measures will be needed for small and medium enterprises to continue operating, including improvements to insolvency regimes⁴⁶, such as capping payments to incumbent insolvency firms, to ensure equitable distribution of funds for small business creditors.

2. Support for vulnerable groups

Tourism is a valuable employer in regional and indigenous communities, and in many cases the livelihood of youth, women, and other vulnerable groups. Consideration must be made for employers of casual and seasonal workers, currently ineligible for JobKeeper.

3. Investment in conservation, nature and cultural-based tourism infrastructure

To ensure that Australian destinations maintain a diverse, attractive and sustainable offer, BYTAP supports investment in tourism infrastructure, preservation and responsible tourism policies and promotion. This will ensure the preservation of natural environments, cultural and historical sites and other local regions at risk of over-tourism and climate change.⁴⁷

4. Marketing Australia as a Youth Tourism destination

BYTAP supports Tourism Australia promoting the benefits of the WHM scheme both to participants already onshore (who may wish to extend their current stay) and to potential participants offshore (once a re-entry plan under a 'secure corridor' model is further developed) - including specifically to those who had already been granted a visa but were unable to take it up due to the crisis.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ [UNWTO One Planet Sustainable Tourism Programme \(2020\) - One Planet Vision for a Responsible Recovery of the Tourism Sector](#)

⁴⁶ [OECD Forum - Rescuing SMEs from the COVID storm: What's next?](#)

⁴⁷ [Why Australia might be at risk of 'overtourism'.; Research for TRAN Committee - Overtourism: impact and possible policy responses European Parliament Policy Department for Structural and Cohesion Policies Brussels\(2018\); <http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au/news-room/latest-news/latest-news/coral-bleaching/2020/statement-coral-bleaching-on-the-great-barrier-reef>](#)

⁴⁸ [BYTAP WHM insights June 2020](#)

BYTAP Contact

BYTAP thanks the Committee for the opportunity to report on the Working Holiday Maker program and welcome the opportunity to have [a BYTAP representative](#) provide more information at a public hearing.

For more information, please contact:

Brendan McKenna

BYTAP Committee

Phone: [REDACTED]

www.bytap.org

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Katrina Greeves for the many hours in which she volunteered her time in order to prepare this paper - it would not have happened without her. We would also like to acknowledge the input and support of people from the following organisations: ATEC, ATV, AQ, BOA NSW, BlazeAid, CAPAA, National Farmers Federation, Farmers NSW and TTF. BYTAP would also like to thank the many contributors from across a number of different sectors.

APPENDIX I - BUSHFIRE RECOVERY NEED FOR WHMS



BlazeAid Inc
ABN 72 456 906 612
PO Box 73
Kilmore Vic 3754

Email: admin@blazeaid.com.au
Web: www.blazeaid.com

7 July 2020

Backpacker Youth Tourism Advisory Panel
Silke Kerwick
Level 3/9 Castlereagh Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Dear Silke,

BlazeAid would like to endorse our support of your organisation in relation to an ongoing need for backpackers ('Working Holiday Makers') at BlazeAid in helping us help those families and communities who were badly affected by the recent bushfires throughout December and into the New Year.

The key points for this endorsement are:

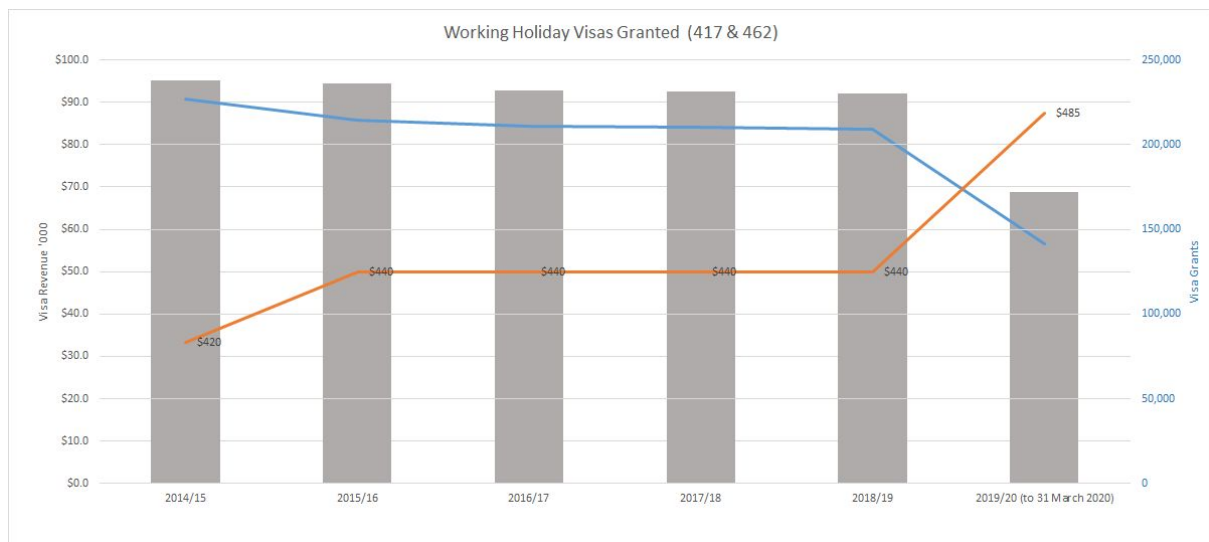
1. 'Backpackers an essential part' of our operation.
2. Backpackers are 'essential workers' in places where they are assisting with bushfire recovery work in natural disaster areas – e.g. all camps of Blazeaid and our Cobargo camp as featured on ABC's 4 Corners last night and our Wingham Camp on Better Homes and Gardens.
3. Backpackers can volunteer with our organisation on bushfire recovery efforts and it will count towards their '88 days' of specified work in regional areas – see the Department of Immigration's information here <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/work-holiday-417/specified-work>
4. We are finding it hard to get Australians coming through to help Blazeaid in enough numbers – whether "grey nomads" or unemployed Australians.
5. We support BYTAP in trying to have Working Holiday Makers return under a COVID-safe plan (including quarantine for 2 weeks on arrival in Sydney) - and we would work together to place these young people in camps organised by Blazeaid.

Yours sincerely

Debbie Buttler
Administrator
BlazeAid

APPENDIX II - WHM VISA GRANTS & INCOME

Working Holiday Maker visa (417) & Work & Holiday (462) fees and estimated revenue							
Year	Visa Fee	Increase \$	Increase %	Visa Grants	Visa Revenue	Visa Revenue	YoY change
2010/11	\$235	\$5	2.20%	192,922	45,336,670	\$45.3	
2011/12	\$270	\$35	14.90%	222,992	60,207,840	\$60.2	16%
2012/13	\$280	\$10	3.70%	258,248	72,309,440	\$72.3	16%
2013/14	\$365	\$85	30.40%	239,592	87,451,080	\$87.5	-7%
2014/15	\$420	\$55	15.10%	226,812	95,261,040	\$95.2	-5%
2015/16	\$440	\$20	4.80%	214,583	94,416,520	\$94.4	-5%
2016/17	\$440	\$0	0.00%	211,011	92,844,840	\$92.8	-2%
2017/18	\$440	\$0	0.00%	210,456	92,600,640	\$92.6	0%
2018/19	\$440	\$0	0.00%	209,036	91,975,840	\$92.0	-1%
2019/20 (to 31 March 2020)	\$485	\$45	10.20%	141,636	68,693,460	\$68.7	-32%



Source: Department of Home Affairs Data updated via [YHA Australia submission to the inquiry Working Holiday Maker Reform package](#)

APPENDIX III - ENDORSEMENT LETTERS



23rd July 2020

Dear Brendan,

Adventure Queensland (AQ) is writing to endorse the Backpacker and Youth Tourism Advisory Panel's (BYTAP) submission to the Working Holiday Maker Program Inquiry.

AQ is a member based incorporated association in Queensland that focusses on the youth, adventure & backpackers travel sector for almost 30 years.

The Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program, specifically the 417 & 462 visa's are job creators & with substantial benefits provided to the Australian economy. The positively return to many sectors of the Australiana economy from a primary & secondary aspect.

These WHM's are high value tourism export that is based on a cultural exchange. They are second only in value to Students from a tourism export. WHM's stay longer, disperse further & spend more. They leave our shores are Australian Tourism promoters driving ongoing benefits to the Australian economy for many years after they return home.

Specifically, for Queensland, the international youth & adventure market provides in excess of \$849m in revenues to the economy of which 65% is spent in regional centres. While only providing 16% of international visitors to Queensland, the sector provides 35% of visitor nights & 20% of International expenditure in Queensland for the year ending March 2020.

AQ fully endorses the recommendation BYTAP's submission that will help rebuild the Australian economy and strengthen it into the future:

1. Support WHMs still in Australia to extend their visa at no charge so they may stay, travel and work in critical jobs, which cannot be filled by Australians.
2. Enable granted WHM visa holders who were unable to enter Australia or who left early due to COVID-19 the ability to reactivate their visa without charge from the time borders reopen with their home country.
3. Support the restart of the WHM Program with critical visa reform to rejuvenate regional communities and tourism spend from this high yield cohort, including:
 - a. restarting WHM visa processing;
 - b. freezing visa costs for 5 years;
 - c. increasing the eligible age to 35 for all WHM source countries;
 - d. tripling visa caps;
 - e. simplifying visa conditions on eligible work days towards gaining a second or third year visa;
 - f. extending eligible work options towards a second or third year visa on an ongoing basis across regional Australia, including volunteer work in disaster/crisis zones; and
 - g. providing additional funding for 3 years to Tourism Australia for marketing campaigns to target WHMs in key source countries and support the restart of the WHM Program.
4. Establish a COVID Safe Corridor for WHM entry utilising BYTAP's 3 step framework.
5. Future proof the WHM Program with less restrictive, more open policies.

Norman Jenkins



President

23rd July, 2020

RE: Endorsement of submission from the Backpacker and Youth Tourism Advisory Panel

Dear Mark,

The Backpacker Operators Association of NSW Inc. (BOA) is writing to endorse the Backpacker and Youth Tourism Advisory Panel's (BYTAP) submission to the Working Holiday Maker Program Inquiry.

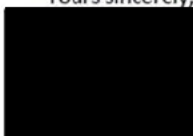
BOA was established in 1992 and is the peak industry body for the youth tourism sector in New South Wales and Australian Capital Territory. We are a not-for-profit association that advocates for businesses operating in youth tourism; our members include accommodation providers, tour operators, F&B operators, travel agents, technology companies and many others.

The Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program provides unquestionable benefits to the Australian economy and supports many industries. Perhaps the most reported benefit is filling labour shortages, primarily benefiting the agricultural industries in regional Australia. Although it must be noted that the benefits reach much further than agricultural industries. WHM's stay longer in Australia and disperse into regional areas more than any other traveller or visa holder. On average they spend over \$10,000 per trip in Australia which is nearly double that of the average International Visitor who spend only \$5,123 per trip. This reciprocated cultural exchange program is not designed to and does not reduce job opportunities for Australians rather it creates them. Our members are proof of this; they employ Australians to meet the demand of the WHM market. Without them more Australians would be unemployed and many businesses would cease to exist.

Key points of endorsement of BYTAP's submission that will help rebuild the Australian economy and strengthen it into the future:

1. Immediate priorities:
 - a. Look after 417 & 462 visa holders who are currently in the country. Allow them to be able to make an application for an extension of current visa or a new visa at no cost.
 - b. Offer a visa extension or a new visa to those who had valid visas but were unable to enter the country due to COVID. This would be at no cost.
 - c. Offer new visa to those who had to leave Australia before the visa expired due to COVID. This would be at no cost.
 - d. Bring WHM's back into the country quickly and safely to fill labour shortages and kick-start the youth tourism industry
2. Future proofing:
 - a. Continue targeting new countries to incorporate into the WHM program that will deliver value
 - b. Increase the low caps on 462 visa WHM countries where demand outweighs supply
 - c. Enable WHM's to extend on a tourist visa without leaving the country.
 - d. Reduce or freeze WHM visa fees for the next 5 years.

Yours sincerely,



Sam Badans | Hon Secretary | BOA NSW Inc



Cultural Au Pair in Australia Association (CAPAA)
c/o AIFS
PO Box 1319
Darlinghurst NSW 1300
info@capaa.com.au
www.capaa.com.au

Date: 23rd July 2020

Dear Silke,

CAPAA would like to endorse our support of your organisation in relation to an ongoing need for live in au pairs ('Working Holiday Makers'). CAPAA Au Pair Agency members help families and communities who depend on flexible childcare in order for them to be able to work and in particular, families who work in essential services and those living in rural areas who cannot access traditional childcare.

The key points for this endorsement are:

1. Live in Au Pairs play an essential part in allowing families to participate in the workforce.
2. Au Pairs provide flexible, live in support for working families all over Australia. Au Pairs allow both parents to work, including Australian mothers returning to the workforce which is an important, driving factor in our economy.
3. We are finding it hard to get Australians to work as Au Pairs as they are not willing/available to live in with families and therefore cannot offer the flexibility required by these families.
4. We support BYTAP in trying to have Working Holiday Makers return under a COVID-safe plan (including quarantine for 2 weeks on arrival) - and CAPAA Agencies will place these young people in host families carefully following a COVID-safe Plan.

Yours sincerely,

Jackie Rylance
CAPAA President

Cultural Au Pair Association of Australia (CAPAA) Bringing Together Quality Au Pair Agencies in Australia



24th July, 2020

RE: Endorsement of submission from the Backpacker and Youth Tourism Advisory Panel

Dear BYTAP,

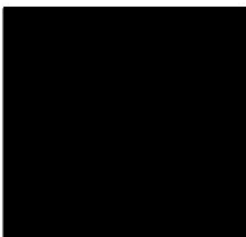
Adventure Tourism Victoria (ATV) is writing to endorse the Backpacker and Youth Tourism Advisory Panel's (BYTAP) submission to the Working Holiday Maker Program Inquiry.

ATV was established in 2018 to better give representation to the youth market in Victoria. We operate as a not-for-profit association that advocates for businesses operating in youth tourism. Our members include accommodation providers, tour operators, F&B operators, travel agents, world class attractions and many others from across the state.

ATV endorses the Key points of BYTAP's submission:

1. Immediate priorities:
 - a. Look after 417 & 462 visa holders who are currently in the country. Allow them to be able to make an application for an extension of current visa or a new visa at no cost.
 - b. Offer a visa extension or a new visa to those who had valid visas but were unable to enter the country due to COVID. This would be at no cost.
 - c. Offer a new visa to those who had to leave Australia before the visa expired due to COVID. This would be at no cost.
 - d. Bring WHM's back into the country quickly and safely to fill labour shortages and kick-start the youth tourism industry
2. Future proofing:
 - a. Continue targeting new countries to incorporate into the WHM program that will deliver value
 - b. Increase the low caps on 462 visa WHM countries where demand outweighs supply
 - c. Enable WHM's to extend on a tourist visa without leaving the country.
 - d. Reduce or freeze WHM visa fees for the next 5 years.

Yours sincerely,



Lisanna Weston

President ATV

APPENDIX IV - WHMs IN THE MEDIA

1. ABC - Blazeaid (13 July 2020)

Backpackers stranded by coronavirus help BlazeAid rebuild bushfire-ravaged farms and communities

By Peta Doherty



French backpacker Morgone Vendeputte (right) is earning another visa by volunteering. (ABC News: Ian Cutmore)

Morgone Vendeputte and her boyfriend's Australian travel dream ended in budget accommodation at the gateway to northern Queensland.

The French couple had just spent six months in Sydney saving for the holiday of a lifetime when the COVID-19 outbreaks began.

"We just lost all the money we saved because we had to stay in an Airbnb," Ms Vendeputte said.

Fortunately, a volunteer group that helps disaster-stricken communities turned out to be an unexpected lifeline for the couple — as well as hundreds of other travellers who had nowhere to go.

During the coronavirus pandemic, BlazeAid has offered food and board in return for fencing work that helps bushfire-affected farmers re-establish their livelihoods.

Key points:

- A change to immigration rules allows backpackers who do volunteer work to stay in Australia longer
- Some travellers have been working with BlazeAid, which repairs farm fences in bushfire-damaged areas
- The organisation says it would have suspended operations without the young volunteers



Many farms around Braidwood in southern NSW were damaged in the summer bushfires. (Supplied: BlazeAid)

Ms Vendeputte drove from Cairns to Braidwood in southern New South Wales to take up the offer, along with dozens of others — such as Louis Wilson, a backpacker from Newcastle in Britain.

"We're just chilling, getting our dinners and helping the farmers, which is a good feeling," Mr Wilson said.

"It really hits you hard when you get out there, and they bring morning tea every day and just thank us constantly, so it's quite humbling."

Working-holiday visa changes benefit fire recovery

[A temporary change to Australia's working-holiday visa rules](#) allows volunteering to be counted towards the 88 days of work that backpackers need to extend their visas.

It has been a saviour for travellers like Kristy Richard, who was driving north looking for farm work when the pandemic prompted many employers to pause their operations.

"We've got I think one day left on our visa and we're up, so we caught it just in time," the English backpacker said.

BlazeAid president Kevin Butler said the influx of young labour had proved "massively important" during the crisis.

Since March, about 2,000 backpackers have contributed.

"They've been a lifeline," Mr Butler said, adding they had allowed the organisation to continue to help struggling communities.

BlazeAid is currently operating more than 20 sites where volunteers work on fire-affected properties in NSW, Victoria and South Australia.

Without the backpackers, Mr Butler said the pandemic would have forced the organisation to shut most of its camps.

And most had planned to "follow the sun", the travellers say they are happy to earn their visas by volunteering.

"We work for a good cause and not just for money," Ms Vendeputte said.

"We help people and we think that is a better way to earn our second visa."

Connecting two generations caught up in a crisis

In the Braidwood camp, coordinator Dennis McGrath said the inflow of backpackers — as well as older Australian travellers — since the COVID-19 outbreak had changed the operation's "feel".

"BlazeAid is generally seen as an older, retiree, grey-nomad-type thing," said Mr McGrath, who counts himself as a grey nomad.

"To have this influx of people, who just make us feel fantastic, we're really proud of them.

"We're also getting a lot more work done because they are a lot younger."

Many of the older volunteers, who could not return home and had nowhere to go when the country partially shut down in March, are still here.

"We all became homeless and we became such a close-knit family for those seven weeks," Carol Newton, from Mackay in Queensland, said.



The younger backpackers have proved a hit with BlazeAid's mostly older volunteers. *(Supplied: BlazeAid)*

She had expected to stay with BlazeAid for a few weeks but that turned into months — and she has no plans to leave soon.

"I had a journey to trek around Australia, I'm a travelling solo nomad, so it's been an absolute blessing."

However, the younger volunteers were keen to continue with their travel plans, eventually.

At the end of her three-month stint with BlazeAid, Ms Vendeputte said she hoped to find paid work to save again for the sun and adventure that drew her to Australia.

"It's a little bit hard to work for six months and just arrive and don't travel at all."

2. Courier Mail - au pairs (24 June 2020)



James, 7, Tommy, 5, and Phoebe, 3, Briony Russell posing at their home in Cannon Hill. Their au pair is leaving and Briony is finding it difficult to find another. Picture: Image/Josh Woning

A CHRONIC shortage of au pairs is striking Australia, especially in regional areas, as working-holiday visa holders flee the country and new ones are barred from entering the country due to the pandemic.

It means many families are being forced to choose between returning to work, or staying at home with the kids.

The Backpacker and Youth Tourism Advisory Panel is in urgent talks with the government in a bid to head off the looming au pair shortage.

[Farmers can't find Aussie workers despite growing dole queue](#)

[Free child care to end in June](#)

The 180,000 working holiday maker visa holders normally in Australia has halved since the international borders shut, while more are expected to leave by September as the UK and European university year starts.

Wendi Aylward, managing director of the American Institute for Foreign Study and part of the panel, said she had heard heartbreaking stories of families having to choose between working or staying at home to care for their children.

She said it was a particular problem for regional areas, where access to child care could be more difficult, or for essential workers like doctors and nurses who worked shifts.

Cannon Hill mum-of-three Briony Russell said au pairs were the only way she had been able to return to work as an intensive care unit nurse, but she was struggling to find a new one due to the shortage.

"It's taken me a long time to get back into my career and I don't want to have to throw it all away again," she said.

Ms Aylward called for au pairs were classed as essential workers so their stay could be extended, similar to health and agriculture workers under COVID-19 provisions, or for new entries to be allowed under strict quarantine arrangements.

"This is flexible child care, another option we can give families, while being a cultural exchange," she said.

Acting Immigration Minister Alan Tudge said immigration had come to a halt under the COVID closures and would remain low for some time to come.

"Higher unemployment also means many roles that would have been filled by migrants can now be filled by Australians," he said.

"Backpackers are already able to work as au pairs with the one host family for up to 12 months, double the usual period allowed for most other jobs."

3. ABC Triple J Hack - 26 June 2020 - agricultural work

'Farmers want ya': Is fruit picking the answer to no jobs for young people?

By James Purtil

Friday 26 June 2020 6:33pm



While most industries are laying off workers, growers are worried they won't have enough. That catch? It's hard, dusty work a long way from the city. "There's also the heat of summer — a lot of people can't hack that," one job services provider says.

Image: ABC News: Marty McCarthy

When life gives you lemons, take a job lemon-picking. COVID has created a shortage of jobs and of seasonal workers: Could a spell in the orchard help get you through the summer?

In September, the start of spring, COVID welfare is due to expire. That juicy fortnightly deposit will be no more. Youth unemployment will probably be high too. Without the current government stimulus, the economy could run off a financial cliff, experts warn. Many young Australians will be short of cash and desperate for work.

There'll probably also be tens of thousands of picking jobs that are normally done by backpackers, according to Gavin Krake, manager of harvest services at MADEC, a not for profit that links growers and workers.

"What normally happens, without COVID, is we have 140,000 working holiday makers floating around the country," he said.

"At the end of last week that was down to 87,000."

Backpackers have been returning home and — due to the border restrictions — new ones haven't been arriving. That shortfall of 53,000 workers is steadily increasing as more trickle away. Growers have been predicting a major shortage of willing hands from October, when summer crops in Tasmania, Victoria and NSW need to be picked.

Already parts of the country are feeling the pinch, Gavin said.

"Areas like Riverland in South Australia would love to have another 200 citrus pickers right now. They're struggling to fill those positions because backpackers in those areas are gravitating back to Adelaide," he said.

"They're striking a bit of trouble."

Brenden Brien, a communications manager with Sarina Russo job agency in Queensland, puts it this way: "Farmers want ya."

'There's the heat of summer - a lot of people can't hack that'

In other parts of the country, the farmers do not want you. The Riverina region of south-western NSW has an oversupply of working holiday makers who have been stuck there due to interstate travel restrictions.

Growers are "sick" of being inundated by requests for work, according to Tony Bugge, harvest officer for MADEC Riverina.

"This year not many people left the area at all because they didn't want to isolate again and were fearful of not getting work," he said.

"They're definitely desperate for work — very desperate."

Most picking work in Australia is done by either backpackers or Pacific Islanders under a special seasonal worker program. Convincing Australians to work in the fields is never easy, Tony says. The work is strenuous and typically short-term. A crop can take just days to pick; after that you have to find work elsewhere. Payment is often tied to amount picked - if it's a bad season, the effective hourly rate will be relatively low.

"It's not to say your local people can't do it, just that a lot of them have chosen not to do it," Tony Bugge said.

To prove how unpopular seasonal picking working is with Australians, Gavin Krake points to a recent government program offering a \$5,000 lump sum to residents who took on the kind of ag-work done by backpackers.

"Even then the take-up was minimal," he said,

"They had thousands of spots and 10 per cent or less were taken up."

This hasn't changed with the current high unemployment. Keely van Wensveen, site manager for QITE, an employment service in Atherton, Far North Queensland, puts the lack of enthusiasm down to extra welfare under COVID.

"There's not a huge difference between working on a farm and getting Centrelink payments."

"You can work 76 hours a fortnight for only \$400 more than what you're receiving from the government."



Cherries being harvested in Tasmania.

Image: Getty

She and Gavin and Tony expect this will change when the welfare comes to an end.

Even then, Gavin says, growers may have to offer more money than they would to backpackers, who have to do the work to secure a visa.

"It'll come back on employers and growers to say, 'What can we do to attract people?'"

"There's also the heat of summer — a lot of people can't hack that."

According to the Queensland Farmers' Federation, there's about 10,000 seasonal horticulture jobs in the state each month. Policy Advisor Diana Saunders says modelling shows it has enough workers to September, but it's less certain after that. If the Federal Government doesn't allow seasonal workers into the country, there could be a shortfall, she says. She couldn't say exactly how many jobs might become available.

"There'll be potential opportunities in November, December depending on the crops," she said.

To prepare for the summer, the QFF has considered setting up an online induction training for Australian farm workers. It's also looking at ways to use the skills of unemployed Australians — rather than getting an IT specialist to pick mangoes, employ them to set-up a computerised tracking service on a farm.

"The industry needs those skills," she said.

If you're interested in farm work, [Harvest Trail](#) has more information about when produce comes into season and how to get in touch with growers. Due to COVID, make sure you have a job lined up before you go to a farm.



Image: Getty

APPENDIX V - COVID-SAFE WHM PROGRAM RESUMPTION PROPOSAL



National
Farmers
Federation



COVID-Safe Working Holiday Maker Program Resumption

OVERVIEW

The National Farmers Federation (NFF) and the Backpacker Youth Tourism Advisory Panel (BYTAP) supports a COVIDSafe plan to restart the Working Holiday Maker (WHM) Program, beginning with a pilot program in three critical employment sectors, where there is a surplus of work unable to be filled by Australians. This program would follow a COVIDSafe Corridor model established in consultation with the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, and the tourism sector. It proposes a three step plan to resume international youth arrivals, which bring over \$2bn per year into Australia in tourism revenue, and is a critical source of revenue for regional businesses across Australia.

GOALS

1. Restart youth travel safely and responsibly, with a trial period of inbound travel programs in 3 critical sectors: agriculture; bushfire recovery and childcare (au pairs).
2. Develop a framework for COVIDsafe travel phases as international travel ramps up post COVID-19.
3. Support the Australian tourism, agricultural industries and working families, dependent on Working Holiday Makers to fill a surplus of jobs, whilst maintaining job opportunities for Australians.
4. Support the health, safety and wellbeing of tourism staff, travellers and the Australian public.

ECONOMIC BENEFIT

The WHM program addresses critical labour shortages of skilled and unskilled work for agricultural and other jobs unable to be filled by Australians, even with incentives¹.

¹ [Seasonal Workers Incentives Trial 2019](#)

The youth market are resilient to recent events and are expected to be the first to return to Australia when given the opportunity. Importantly Working Holiday Makers (WHMs) can undertake temporary work, which funds their travels. Each one brings \$5,000 with them as a visa requirement, and each one spends \$10,300 during their stay, compared to \$687 per trip that Australians spend domestically². The youth market contributes 27 per cent of all visitor arrivals to Australia and 45 per cent of all visitor spend, bringing \$19.5 billion for the year ending December 2018 for the visitor economy, which is spent predominantly across the tourism, retail, transport, arts/cultural and hospitality sectors³.

WHMs disperse further and longer into regional Australia than other international visitors, with 36% of nights spent in regional areas (compared to 19% of all international travellers), bringing 416,000 visitors and \$946M into regional economies for the year ending December 2019⁴.

The tourism industry is facing a protracted recovery (with average losses in total tourism receipts from all inbound markets of \$2b per month and up to \$5.3b impact of lost wages to the broader economy and up to \$1.59b lost PAYG tax contributions) and is in need of continued government support for the 302,000 tourism businesses to protect jobs for Australians⁵.

3-STEP PLAN FOR SAFE INTERNATIONAL YOUTH ARRIVALS

1. COVIDSafe Working Holidaymaker program framework

To facilitate a safe resumption of the Working Holiday Maker program to support economic growth and manage community expectations, NFF/BYTAP proposes a phased approach (see appendix 1) starting with a trial or pilot program:

Phase 1 - Fully arranged limited arrivals a trial program

NFF/BYTAP endorses a trial period of 3 fully arranged programs, limited in numbers to test the viability of the restart of a Working Holiday Program under COVIDSafe protocols. These trials will be characterised by pre-arranged travel itineraries by select COVIDSafe sponsor agencies, participants sourced from pre-approved WH countries, guaranteed work placements or volunteer placements, and agreed limitations for regional dispersal to minimise impact and reduce risk.

² [Tourism Australia Working Holiday Fact Sheet: Tourism Research Australia National Visitor Survey December 2019](#); International Visitors Survey (IVS) YE March 2020 Tourism Research Australia

³ [Tourism Research Australia National Visitor Survey December 2019: distribution of Tourism Businesses ending June 2018](#); [Tourism Australia Working Holiday Fact Sheet](#).

⁴ [Tourism Research Australia: International Visitors Survey December 2019](#).

⁵ [Tourism Transport Forum Estimated Impact of Coronavirus on the Australian Visitor Economy](#); [Tourism Research Australia - Tourism Businesses in Australia, June 2018](#).

1. Agricultural work (e.g seasonal and pastoral), endorsed by the National Farmers Federation (100 people)
2. Au pairs (100 people) endorsed by the Cultural Au Pair Association of Australia "CAPAA".
3. Volunteer bushfire recovery efforts coordinated by 'Blazeaid' (providing support in natural disaster areas) <https://blazeaid.com.au/>⁶ (100 people)

NFF/BYTAP recommends that where Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) advice permits, pilot programs be considered for October 2020 to best prepare for the expansion of international travel in early 2021.

2. Safety protocols

The health and safety of Australians and our visitors is paramount. NFF/BYTAP endorses an extension of national health and safety protocols and a COVIDSafe corridor for Working Holiday makers to include:

- Sponsor agencies who will conduct pre-trip medical screening and safety protocols.
- The selection of two source countries: the United Kingdom and Germany, where close trade relations exist. Consideration to also be given to members of the 'First Movers' group of countries (where low levels of new COVID-19 infections exist.)
- A mandatory quarantine at port of arrival in accommodation vetted by State Health Authorities with health screening checkpoints and verifications.
- Specified itinerary from arrival to departure using established inbound tourism networks including sponsor agencies and employers to control flow and dispersal of arrivals.
- All program participant companies hold COVID-Safe plans.
- Use of the COVIDSafe App by WHM participants.
- Mandatory travel insurance for the duration of the visa, with minimum agreed limits, to cover medical treatment, hospitalisation or death and repatriation for medical emergencies.

3. Guiding Principles for Tourism Operators

NFF/BYTAP, all members of the Backpacker Operators Association in New South Wales, Adventure Queensland and Adventure Tourism Victoria, and Cultural Au Pair Association of Australia endorse the following principles for the resumption of international youth travel through a COVIDSafe Corridor and recommend their inclusion in national protocols for tourism operators.

⁶ For regional areas for eligible specified bushfire recovery work see <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/work-holiday-417/specified-work>

Health and Safety

- The health and safety of all Australians and our visitors is paramount and participating organisations and their staff will comply with AHPPC advice in all their operations as well as relevant state health advisories.

Working Holiday (417, 462) Visas

- The issuing of visas provides travellers with certainty of entry and clarity of entry conditions.
- NFF/BYTAP recommends that processing of 417 and 462 visas recommence, and that applicants previously granted a visa who were unable to take it up due to the crisis are authorised to enter under 'secure corridor' arrangements.
- NFF/BYTAP recommends subsidising COVID testing within the visa fee to mandate health and safety protocols.
- NFF/BYTAP recommends that consideration be given to requiring the use of the COVID-Safe App.
- NFF/BYTAP recommends that travellers be advised that if they leave Australia during the course of their visa they will be subject to a subsequent period of quarantine upon re-entry to Australia.

Job retention and accessibility

- NFF/BYTAP welcomes the extension to the JobKeeper program to 31 March 2021 to retain jobs for Australians and supports any ongoing extension of the JobKeeper program, particularly for employers within the tourism sector and in specific regions who face a significant fall in turnover.
- NFF/BYTAP supports jobs being made accessible to Australian residents as a priority, ensuring jobs are advertised locally to be filled by Australians during phase 1 and phase 2 of this program, enabling accessibility for suitably qualified individuals and excess work supplied to Working Holiday Makers through this program.
- Tourism operators in Phase 1 will arrange and manage job placements pre-arrival; in Phase 2 travellers may seek jobs on arrival, but may not disperse from their arrival accommodation until a job is confirmed; during Phase 3, travellers will be enabled to independently travel and seek their own work. It should be noted that it is expected all WHMs participating under Phases 1-3 will complete domestic travel whilst in Australia.

Quarantining

- Onshore quarantining for the period recommended by the AHPPC is essential for all international arrivals.
- NFF/BYTAP endorses travellers to be tested prior to departing their home country.
- Tourism operators will arrange and manage mandatory quarantine on arrival at suitable hostel or budget accommodation vetted by State Health Authorities, in full cooperation with relevant government authorities responsible for security
- NFF/BYTAP proposes the establishment of affordable traveller quarantining facilities as a shared expense, with the traveller contributing to the costs of accommodation, meals and transfers, and the health and security services through an additional temporary COVIDSafe health levy payable on arrival, which during Phase 1 & 2 is proposed to be fully subsidised by the government.
- Operators are to be provided access to any government funded programs to offset quarantining costs.
- NFF/BYTAP proposes that COVID testing of Working Holiday Makers in quarantine and the management of any positive cases be provided by State Public Health Units.

International Travel

- NFF/BYTAP proposes that travellers will meet the cost of flights. However, the ability for youth to access affordable flights creates significant challenges and requires the leadership of government to continue to support local and international airline agreements to build airline capacity at a reasonable cost.
- NFF/BYTAP supports the IHEA proposal for the Australian government to develop a travel program in conjunction with airlines and supported by international agreements to enable students (and youth travellers) to access affordable flights.
- During Phase 1 & 2, operators will provide domestic travel arrangements for travellers arriving in Australia including meeting at airports and transferring them to quarantine facilities and jobs. Dispersal across State borders or into certain regions will be dependent on whether domestic quarantine or travel bans are in place. During Phase 3, travellers will source their own arrangements from operators.

Other important considerations

- NFF/BYTAP supports the extension of government financial support packages to ensure tourism and other small businesses remain operational, including interest free loans to support their immediate cash flow and meet fixed costs, State land rent waivers and other fees and charges. This is particularly critical for the youth tourism sector which already operates on slim margins, and in highly seasonal businesses.

- NFF/BYTAP supports the establishment of programs to deliver advice and support to pivot businesses towards domestic tourism, diversification or innovation.
- NFF/BYTAP recommends establishing a pro-rata credit system for existing 417 and 462 visa holders or travellers who were unable to enter Australia or returned home prematurely due to COVID travel bans.
- NFF/BYTAP supports Tourism Australia in promoting the benefits of the reciprocal Working Holiday Maker cultural exchange scheme both to participants already onshore (who may wish to extend their current stay) and to potential participants offshore (once a re-entry plan under a 'secure corridor' model is further developed) - including those who had already been granted a visa but were unable to take it up due to COVID-19.⁷

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⁷ [BYTAP video of COVID-19 WHMs \(June 2020\)](#)

APPENDIX 1 - PHASING THE RETURN OF INBOUND YOUTH TOURISM

Phase	Cohorts	Logistics	Accommodation	Jobs	Health & Safety	Expected Timing
Phase 1 - Pilot program	462 and 417 visa holders granted to arrive during travel bans from to be agreed countries.	Prearranged itinerary and transport package within arrival state (with Sydney as the proposed gateway for this pilot). No leakage or dispersal to other states.	14 day mandatory quarantine accommodation in arrival port (limited to Sydney arrivals)	Arranged prior to arrival.	3 COVID-19 tests fully subsidised by the government : 1. on arrival; 2. 14 days post arrival. 3. Pre-job placement.	October - November 2020
Phase 2 - Staggered ramp up	Existing 462 and 417 visa holders and visa holders from COVIDSafe source countries with low daily transmission rates.	Partially arranged itinerary where travel restrictions allow. No access to public transport.	14 day quarantine accommodation in arrival port where mandated by Health Authorities	Arranged on arrival. May not depart arrival port until job is confirmed.	3 COVID-19 tests partially subsidised by the government and the balance paid by the traveller. 1. on arrival; 2. 14 days post arrival. 3. Pre-job placement.	December 2020 - March 2021
Phase 3 - Independent Travel	New and existing 462 and 417 visa applications	Fully independent travel where travel restrictions allow.	14 day quarantine accommodation in arrival port where mandated by Health Authorities	Arranged on arrival.	Fully paid by the traveller. 1. on arrival; 2. 14 days post arrival. 3. Pre-job placement.	March 2021 onwards