



12 December 2022

To: jscfadt@aph.gov.au

Ref: Backpacker & Youth Tourism Advisory Panel (BYTAP) – submission re Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade (JSCFADT) inquiry into tourism & international education sectors

Dear Sir or Madam,

I write to you on behalf of the Backpacker & Youth Tourism Advisory Panel (BYTAP). As the peak industry body representing the youth tourism sector, BYTAP advocates that backpackers (youth travellers on tourist visas) and Working Holiday Makers “WHMs” (visa subclass holders 417 and 462) are integral to rebuilding tourism in both urban and regional Australia. We also support growth in the international education sector as overseas students travel around Australia when on study breaks and/or at the end of their courses.

In a normal year, over 150,000 WHMs from nearly 50 countries would be in Australia on this reciprocal cultural exchange program. Currently there are around 90,000 in-country, as the tourism industry continues to feel the after-effects of the pandemic disruption. It is vital therefore to plan for the short, medium and long term to revive this segment of the youth tourism sector, which was worth \$3.2billion to the Australian economy each year pre-pandemic (*source: Tourism Australia*)¹

WHM's dispersal is especially critical in filling casual temporary jobs in tourism & hospitality in regional areas, supporting these industries to be able to operate at full capacity. They also assist with other types of regional work where there is high seasonal demand, including agriculture and au-pairing.

With regards to Working Holiday Makers we note the following relating to the Terms of Reference of the inquiry:

<i>Terms of Reference</i>	BYTAP position
Challenges and opportunities for growth in tourism and how Australia can reassert itself as a leader in the international tourism sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government to consider increasing the age limit to 35 for all participating countries on the Working Holiday Maker 462 and 417 visa subclasses (currently only some countries have this expanded limit from age 30)• Amend policy settings to offer former Working Holiday Makers who have returned to their home countries, and who still meet the age criteria, the ability to apply for a second visa• Remove visa caps on countries identified as 'low risk' – see current status of visa caps here (some as low as 100 and quickly exhausted each year) - https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/what-we-do/whm-program/status-of-country-caps• Remove the English language, tertiary level, and letter of support requirements from countries where it applies for the 462 Working Holiday Maker visa (as these are onerous imposts that

¹ www.tourism.australia.com/content/dam/digital/corporate/documents/ta-whm-infographic-october-2021.pdf

<https://www.tourism.australia.com/en/insights/industry-sectors/youth.html>

	<p>are not evenly applied to all countries in the program and are not requirements under the 417 Working Holiday visa)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fast-track agreements with new countries such as Mexico and the Philippines which are well established in other markets that offer similar visa arrangements • Fast-track the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) visa changes with the UK (as this will incorporate positive changes to Working Holiday Maker visas for Britons - including an increase in the age limit to 35, and the offering of an initial three-year visa with no requirement for any specified work in any particular area to be undertaken to obtain this duration). • Consideration to permit Tourist visa holders to transfer to a 462 or 417 visa onshore. Currently applicants must leave Australia in order to apply.
The effectiveness of recent tourism campaigns overseas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BYTAP commends the current “Come and say “G’Day” Tourism Australia global marketing campaign. • BYTAP is currently working closely with Tourism Australia, together with industry representatives to develop effective marketing and communications campaigns to rebuild the youth tourism segment (including producing a suite of digital assets for promotional purposes featuring WHMs)
The promotion of regional Australia as a world class international travel destination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Backpackers and WHMs disperse widely in regional areas, attracted by Australia’s unique landscape, flora, fauna and indigenous culture • Promotion of the opportunities for ‘Work’ as well as ‘Holiday’ in regional Australia is a key marketing message that needs to be communicated to potential WHMs (as their wages subsidise their travels)

BYTAP is also aligned with the Federal Government’s ***Thrive 2030 Strategy – The Re-Imagined Visitor Economy*** – which has many recommendations regarding harnessing the opportunity that Working Holiday Makers present www.austrade.gov.au/news/publications/thrive-2030-strategy

We particularly note that in the *Thrive 2030 Strategy Action Plan – Phase 1: Recovery 2022-2024* under *Priority 3 - Grow a secure and resilient workforce* there are several action items listed regarding Working Holiday Makers.

We also support the recommendations in the ***Reimagining the Visitor Economy – Expert Panel Report*** - www.austrade.gov.au/news/publications/reimagining-the-visitor-economy-expert-panel-report

Specifically, under ‘A Modern Workforce’ there is the recommendation to reform the Working Holiday Maker scheme to increase the pool of workers for the visitor economy:

- This should include increasing age limits to 35 for all participating countries (on a non-reciprocal basis if need be)
- Fast-tracking agreements with new countries.

In summary, we therefore request that backpackers and Working Holiday Makers be afforded due consideration in the recommendations arising from this inquiry. I would also be happy to elaborate further on the issues and to give evidence at public hearings (and arrange for Working Holiday Makers to do so too if required).

Yours sincerely,



WENDI AYLWARD

CHAIRPERSON, BYTAP