

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Tourism to be significantly boosted by China Free Trade Agreement – TAA TAA calls for even greater liberalisation of visa arrangements**

18 November 2014: Tourism Accommodation Australia (TAA) has welcomed the announcement of the China Free Trade Agreement, saying that Australia’s hotel and tourism sector could be a major benefactor from the closer ties.

In particular, TAA welcomed the announcement by the Federal Government that would see Australia grant visas for up to 5000 Chinese work and holiday makers annually. In addition, up to 1800 skilled Chinese workers, including chefs and Mandarin language tutors, would be eligible to apply for 457 work visas.

Commenting on the changes to the visa arrangements, Acting CEO for TAA, Carol Giuseppi, said that the timing of the announcement was particularly important.

“Australia is undergoing the largest expansion of its hotel sector in over 20 years, with new hotel developments across the country, so it will be beneficial to have access to a pool of labour to work in both existing and new hotels,” said Ms Giuseppi.

“Their availability will come at a time of record growth in Chinese inbound travel and will cater for the many hotel groups seeking Mandarin-speaking staff. The allocation of more 457 visas to chefs will particularly address a shortage of skilled labour in hotel F&B operations.

“While TAA applauds the Government’s positive initiatives, the hospitality sector would benefit even further if the Working Holiday Visa programme was extended from 12 months to 24 months duration, with a corresponding increase in the working portion of this from six months to 12 months.

“To meet the shortage of workers in the hospitality sector, we would also call on the Government to allow Working Holiday Visa holders who meet the criteria for extending their stay by working in a regional area, to be able to spend their second six-month working stint working in a city-based tourism business.”

Ms Giuseppi said that other changes announced as part of the Free Trade Agreement would also benefit the tourism and hospitality sector.

“Australia’s hotel and tourism sector will benefit from increased investment via the new Investment Facilitation Arrangements, while education-related travel to Australia will be significantly boosted as a result of new measures announced as part of the agreement,” said Ms Giuseppi.

“The Agreement will create far closer links between the two countries, and to facilitate the enhanced links our visa system must improve to make it easier and cheaper for Chinese travellers to visit Australia. The Working Holiday Visa initiative is excellent, and should be accompanied by an overall review of visas for Chinese travellers, as there is outstanding potential for growth from the Chinese market which would be well-served by reforms to the visa application process.”

Further information:

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