

Friday, 5 March 2021

SKILLS CRISIS FOCUS OF NATIONAL TAA BOARD MEETING

The accommodation sector's on-going skills crisis and the looming end of JobKeeper dominated discussions at the first Tourism Accommodation Australia national board meeting for 2021.

More than a dozen industry leaders gathered at the new TAA headquarters in Castlereagh St Sydney in person and via zoom for the high level meeting this week.

TAA CEO Michael Johnson said a range of issues were discussed including the continuing merger talks with the Accommodation Association, the impacts of COVID on the sector and the skills shortage.

"To put it simply, everyone has lost employees who have returned to their home countries due to COVID – there is a real need for front-line staff and chefs in particular," Mr Johnson said.

"We already had a skills shortage in regional areas before the pandemic hit – COVID has only made a bad situation worse.

"There are currently only about 35,000 Working Holiday Makers in Australia - well down from the usual average of 140,000.

"Combined with the lack of international students, it is really having a major impact on our required labour force and TAA will continue to work with Government on these fronts."

Mr Johnson said the finishing of JobKeeper at the end of the month was another major topic discussed.

"TAA has been briefing Treasury regularly on the crisis impacting our sector – and have been making the case for targeted assistance packages aimed at struggling CBD hotels in particular," he said.

"While some regional tourism areas are flourishing, occupancy rates in Sydney's CBD are not even at the 35% mark – and that figure will not improve for some time given the lack of international tourism."

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