

Priority Area 2: Expanding the traditional workforce

Increasing labour force supply or participation will be a key element in addressing current and projected labour shortages.

Australia still has significant scope to increase workforce participation despite the current record employment levels.

The rate in some areas is still low compared to other developed countries.

Business can improve participation rates in our industry by developing strategies to target:

- People with disabilities, parents and welfare recipients returning to the workforce.
- Older workers, including those returning to the industry after a period of absence.
- Indigenous people.
- The emerging 'Generation Y' employee.
- Overseas workers.
- Current workforce.
- People who speak languages other than English.

Focus Area 1: Welfare to work target groups

There is significant scope to increase the participation of welfare recipients. The ongoing labour and skills shortages will require the industry to invest more in recruitment strategies that seek to engage suitable people from these groups. There is agreement among stakeholders that improving workforce participation in the industry by under-represented groups could ease labour pressures and bring broader benefits to the hospitality and tourism industry, society and the economy.

Improving workforce participation of these groups will require greater pre-employment screening to determine suitability. There needs to be a willingness by employers to make reasonable adjustments to employment arrangements and workplace practices to cater for the needs of these groups.

Focus Area 2: Engaging Indigenous workers

Tourism research indicates that engagement with Indigenous Australians and their culture is one of the major experiences that overseas visitors are seeking when they travel here.

A significant number of young Indigenous people will be entering the workforce over the next two decades. Many of these are located in regional areas where tourism and hospitality businesses are major employers.

Employment in the hospitality and tourism industry has the potential to act as a pathway for Indigenous economic independence through the development of Indigenous-owned tourism enterprises. Close local community connections can increase the commitment to work from local Indigenous people and increase the skills base of individuals interested in developing a career in the industry.

Focus Area 3: Managing the generational change: Young people

The 'Generation Y' employee (those born from 1978–1994) is a workforce challenge that employers will need to meet. It is this age group that provides a significant part of the traditional tourism and hospitality workforce and this generation has significantly different expectations of the workplace than previous generations.

Industry needs through its implementation of Discover Hospitality and Discover Tourism⁶ make a concerted effort to improve its current image and brand to present itself as a career choice to this group. The campaign has considered the vocational motivations to Gen Y (among other target groups) and will, in its approach, appeal to this area of potential labour supply.

Existing and mature age workers

Initiatives introduced to attract older workers and accommodate their needs will prove even more valuable as this workforce pool grows.

The industry is well suited to encourage participation of semi-retired workers who are seeking short-term jobs on a seasonal basis or jobs that offer reduced hours of work.

Labour shortages and increased longevity have meant that the participation of mature age people has increased substantially over recent years, but there is still room to increase numbers by encouraging mature aged workers to delay their retirement. Part time work in the tourism and hospitality industry fulfils a need for older workers to continue to augment this retirement income.

Industry's reliance on casual and seasonal labour is for many of the target groups a positive selling point for those who do not wish to work full-time. More flexible hours and conditions will encourage mature aged workers to remain in the workforce, rather than being forced to retire completely. These workers potentially bring personal and professional skills and knowledge which would benefit employers in the industry, whilst the flexibility of work hours in the industry may be an appropriate fit to the employees' lifestyle needs.

The industry will not be able to make further serious inroads into lifting participation by older Australians without a flexible workplace relations system that allows people to transition from full time employment into retirement through a mix of flexible working arrangements.

Further research is required to establish the motivators, attractors and inhibitors of this potential workforce.

In addition to addressing labour shortages, the employment of older workers is likely to:

- increase workforce diversity
- increase workforce expertise and experience
- reduce the budgetary pressures from ageing—generally, workers pay more tax and have a lower call on welfare and
- cater for an increasingly aging customer base.

⁶ An industry-wide career and vocational education information and promotional campaign

Focus Area 4: Using overseas workers

The industry currently utilises overseas staff through a range of measures such as Working Holiday Visas, employer sponsored 457 visas, overseas students and permanent residence arrangements for skilled migrants.

Research suggests that future workforce needs will require ongoing access to overseas workers. Therefore, consideration must be given to how the industry will enter the global market for skilled and unskilled labour without undermining the employment conditions of Australian workers.

Areas which warrant specific consideration include:

- Extending the Migration Occupations in Demand List (MODL) to recognise front of house occupations and food and beverage managers as skilled trades.
- Linking recent changes that enable graduates to remain in the country for eighteen months after graduation to long term employment strategies.
- Reviewing 457 (employer sponsored) visa conditions and arrangements to make them more accessible to the industry or specific regions.
- Fast tracking visa processing through a greater use of labour agreements negotiated between the Australian Government and employers and/or industrial associations. Despite recent changes to the visa administration program now allows fast-tracking of applications for employers with a proven track record of employing visa holders, there is a need for further innovation in the area of immigration and visa processing.
- Reviewing existing educational visa and immigration agent arrangements to ensure they support industry labour force needs.
- Develop an integrated process to facilitate the migration of suitably qualified overseas workers to identified employers.
- Promote the establishment of relationships with identified countries that provide access to suitably qualified workers. This would include the development of programs to train people to a certain qualification levels, linked this to a fast track visa nomination process.

Focus Area 5: Current workforce

There is a greater need for industry to recognise and develop the current workforce that is already available to them. These people are already working, and therefore are willing and capable to work. This makes these workers a valuable and attractive source for employers.

This process can be achieved through making the job roles attractive to the workers, especially in comparison with other industries that they may have previously worked in.

These current workers are most attractive to employers as marginalised and vulnerable segments of the workforce may pose a demanding and problematic process. Industry must first prove its legitimacy, ability and capacity to treat such workers fairly.