

Jobs and Skills Australia Occupational Shortage List

March 2026

QTIC Industry Consultation



**QUEENSLAND
TOURISM INDUSTRY
COUNCIL**

The Voice of Tourism

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INTRODUCTION

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) is the peak industry body and principal advocate for Queensland's tourism, hospitality and events sectors. QTIC is committed to supporting the sustainable growth and long-term success of the state's visitor economy.

As a not-for-profit, membership-based organisation, QTIC represents the interests of tourism businesses across Queensland. The organisation ensures that the priorities, challenges and perspectives of its members and the broader tourism industry are reflected in policy discussions and decision-making processes at all levels of government.

QTIC supports industry development through the delivery of workforce and skills initiatives, as well as advocacy for investment in tourism attractions and enabling infrastructure. The organisation also provides expert advice, business and workforce development support, and access to key industry insights to assist businesses in strengthening their operations and competitiveness.

Tourism continues to be a significant and growing contributor to Queensland's economy. For the year ending September 2025, domestic overnight visitors spent \$27.6 billion, while international visitors contributed \$8.8 billion. Combined with other visitor expenditure, this resulted in total tourism spending of \$43.5 billion, equivalent to approximately \$119.1 million per day.¹

In 2023–24, tourism generated a combined direct and indirect Gross State Product (GSP) of \$37.6 billion, representing 7.4 per cent of Queensland's total GSP. Of this, \$18.7 billion was a direct contribution (3.7 per cent of total GSP), with a further \$18.9 billion generated indirectly through flow-on economic activity.²

During 2023–24, the tourism industry directly supported approximately 156,000 filled jobs, accounting for 5 per cent of total employment in Queensland. A further 121,000 jobs were supported indirectly, bringing tourism's total employment contribution to 8.8 per cent of the state's workforce. The sector employs more people than the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry (3.7 per cent) and the mining industry (1.8 per cent) combined.

Key areas of direct tourism employment include cafés, restaurants and takeaway food services (43,000 jobs), followed by retail trade (26,000 jobs) and accommodation services (22,000 jobs).³

Small businesses form the foundation of Queensland's tourism sector. More than 90 per cent of tourism businesses employ fewer than 20 people. Across the state, there are approximately 65,000 tourism-related businesses, with 53 per cent operating outside the Brisbane metropolitan region.⁴

Tourism is a highly labour-intensive industry, and workforce shortages directly impact business capacity, visitor experience and regional economic activity.

¹ Source: Tourism Research Australia - International and National Visitor Surveys. Overnight visitor expenditure only.

² Source: Tourism Research Australia - State Tourism Satellite Accounts 2023-24.

³ Source: Tourism Research Australia - State Tourism Satellite Accounts 2023-24.

⁴ Source: Tourism Research Australia - Tourism businesses in Australia, June 2018 to June 2024, Australian Bureau of Statistics

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) presents this submission to inform the 2026 Occupational Shortage List (OSL), drawing on consultation with tourism, hospitality and visitor economy businesses across Queensland. Between February and March 2026, QTIC surveyed 69 businesses across 13 tourism regions, capturing workforce insights from accommodation providers, tour operators, attractions and hospitality businesses. The results confirm that persistent labour shortages continue to affect the sector, with challenges particularly acute in regional tourism destinations.

KEY FINDINGS

PERSISTENT WORKFORCE SHORTAGES

Approximately 60 per cent of responding businesses reported current staff shortages, particularly in hospitality management, culinary and frontline service roles.

SYSTEMIC REGIONAL WORKFORCE CHALLENGES

While metropolitan areas report shortages in specialised roles such as chefs and hospitality managers, regional tourism destinations face broader workforce gaps across multiple occupations, including accommodation management, tourism operations and visitor services.

CRITICAL OCCUPATIONS IN SHORTAGE

The consultation identified consistent shortages across several occupations essential to tourism operations, including:

- Senior Chefs, Chefs and Cooks
- Café and Restaurant Managers
- Accommodation and Hospitality Managers
- Hotel or Motel Managers
- Tour Guides and Visitor Services Staff
- Housekeeping and cleaning staff
- Marine tourism occupations including vessel operators and deckhands

RECRUITMENT BARRIERS

Employers reported several barriers affecting recruitment and retention, including:

- Lack of industry experience among applicants
- Limited availability of skilled workers
- Housing shortages in regional destinations
- Visa and migration restrictions
- Limited training pathways for specialised tourism occupations

MIGRATION POLICY GAPS

While migration pathways support some core hospitality roles, many tourism service and marine tourism occupations lack appropriate migration options, despite clear workforce shortages.

CONCLUSION

The consultation confirms that workforce shortages in Queensland's tourism industry are persistent and structural, particularly in regional tourism destinations and specialised tourism occupations.

- Addressing these shortages will require a coordinated policy response including:
- Improved alignment between migration pathways and tourism occupations
- Targeted workforce attraction strategies for regional destinations
- Greater flexibility within temporary visa programs
- Strengthened training pathways for specialised tourism roles

QTIC encourages Jobs and Skills Australia to incorporate these industry insights into the 2026 Occupational Shortage List and broader workforce planning initiatives.

KEY OCCUPATIONS IN SHORTAGE

- Senior Chef / Chef / Cook
- Café or Restaurant Manager
- Accommodation and Hospitality Manager
- Hotel or Motel Manager
- Tour Guide
- Marine Tourism Roles (Ship's Master, Deckhand)

OVERVIEW

The Occupational Shortage List (OSL), produced by Jobs and Skills Australia, identifies occupations experiencing workforce shortages across Australia and informs government workforce policy, migration settings and training priorities.

The OSL provides a national snapshot of labour market conditions, drawing on a combination of labour market data, employer surveys and consultation with industry stakeholders. The list includes occupations classified under the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) at skill levels 1–4.

Industry consultation plays a critical role in the development of the OSL by providing real-time insights into recruitment challenges faced by employers, particularly in sectors where labour shortages may not be fully captured through labour market data alone.

As the peak industry body representing Queensland's tourism, hospitality and events sectors, QTIC undertook targeted consultation with tourism businesses to capture sector-specific workforce insights. The findings provide evidence of workforce shortages across a range of occupations critical to the visitor economy, particularly in regional tourism destinations and specialised tourism sectors. Tourism workforce shortages are not always fully captured in national labour market data due to the sector's reliance on seasonal, regional and experience-based roles.

This submission presents the outcomes of that consultation and highlights key occupations experiencing shortages, barriers affecting recruitment and policy considerations relevant to workforce planning in the tourism industry.

QTIC INDUSTRY CONSULTATION

Between February and March 2026, the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) undertook a review of occupational shortages across Queensland's tourism and hospitality sectors. To capture industry perspectives, QTIC developed two surveys based on the Jobs and Skills Australia Occupational Shortage List (OSL) stakeholder survey, one focused on tourism occupations and the other on hospitality occupations. These surveys were distributed through QTIC's membership base and broader industry networks.

A total of 77 responses were received from 69 businesses and industry stakeholders across Queensland's 13 tourism regions, representing a diverse cross-section of the visitor economy.

The consultation captured insights from businesses operating across key tourism and hospitality sectors, including accommodation providers, tour operators, attractions, and food and beverage businesses.

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Responses were received from businesses across 12 tourism regions, with the highest participation recorded in:

- Tropical North Queensland (21 businesses)
- Brisbane (13 businesses)
- Gold Coast (5 businesses)
- Sunshine Coast (5 businesses)
- Whitsundays (5 businesses)
- Southern Queensland Country (5 businesses)
- Outback Queensland (5 businesses)

Additional responses were received from businesses operating in the Fraser Coast, Townsville, Bundaberg, and Capricorn regions, as well as from operators with a national presence.

INDUSTRY REPRESENTATION

The consultation captured input primarily from core tourism and hospitality sectors, including:

- Accommodation (31 businesses, largest representation)
- Tour operators (11 businesses)
- Food and beverage (7 businesses)
- Attractions (6 businesses)
- Adventure and experience operators (3 businesses)

Additional responses were received from businesses involved in travel services, marine transport, visitor information services, festivals and events, wineries and breweries, and professional services supporting the tourism industry.

BUSINESS SIZE

Participants represented businesses of varying sizes, with strong representation from small and medium-sized enterprises, which form the backbone of Queensland's tourism sector:

- Small businesses (5–19 employees): 30
- Medium businesses (20–199 employees): 19
- Micro businesses (1–4 employees): 9
- Large businesses (200+ employees): 8
- Sole traders: 3

KEY INSIGHT

The consultation results highlight the dominant role of small and medium-sized enterprises in Queensland's tourism industry, with accommodation providers and tourism operators comprising the majority of respondents.

Participation from businesses across multiple tourism regions, particularly Tropical North Queensland and Brisbane, provides a broad overview of workforce challenges affecting both regional and metropolitan visitor economies.

CONSULTATION RESULTS

WORKFORCE CHALLENGES BY REGION

Using the survey comments from the "Main Challenge with Applicants" section of both spreadsheets (42 tourism responses and 33 hospitality responses), the workforce challenges can be expanded to show not just the type of shortages, but the specific characteristics of applicants employers are encountering.

Below is an updated and richer Workforce Challenges by Region / Applicant Type analysis that incorporates those qualitative comments.

WORKFORCE CHALLENGES BY REGION: APPLICANT CHARACTERISTICS AND FEEDBACK

The QTIC consultation highlights that workforce shortages are not only due to a lack of applicants, but also due to the type, preparedness, and availability of candidates applying for tourism and hospitality roles.

Employer comments from both surveys reinforce the quantitative findings, showing that many businesses are receiving applications from individuals who lack experience, appropriate skills, work rights, or genuine commitment to employment.

Several structural barriers particularly housing shortages, visa eligibility settings, and regional workforce attraction challenges also affect recruitment outcomes.

KEY APPLICANT CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED BY INDUSTRY

1. Lack of Experience and Job Readiness

The most frequently cited challenge was that many applicants lack practical experience or job-ready skills.

Employers reported receiving candidates who:

- Have little or no experience in tourism or hospitality roles
- Have qualifications but limited practical capability
- Require significant training before becoming productive employees.

Examples from survey responses include:

- *"Not having basic skills. No experience, no visa, no accommodation."*
- *"Applicants not currently holding required qualifications."*
- *"Newly qualified skippers often have very little practical experience and the onus then falls on the employer to teach them."*
- *"Under-skilled applicants applying for skilled roles."*

This challenge was particularly evident in specialised tourism roles such as marine operations, guiding, hospitality management and culinary positions.

2. Poor Applicant Reliability and Work Ethic

Employers reported that some applicants demonstrate limited reliability or commitment to employment.

Common issues included:

- Applicants failing to attend interviews
- Applicants not turning up for shifts after accepting a job
- Candidates applying for roles without genuine intention to work.

Employer comments included:

- *“Not turning up for interviews or even when offered the position.”*
- *“Some applicants only interested in ticking off Centrelink obligations.”*
- *“Lack of desire to work.”*

These responses suggest that employers are often spending significant time screening applicants who are not genuinely seeking employment.

3. Applicants Without Appropriate Work Rights

Many employers reported receiving applications from international candidates who do not yet have the legal ability to work in Australia.

Examples include:

- Applicants still overseas
- Applicants requiring sponsorship
- Visa restrictions preventing employment.

Employer feedback included:

- *“They are not even in the country at the time of application.”*
- *“Sponsorship is getting harder and costs more.”*

This issue was particularly common in sectors traditionally supported by temporary migrant labour such as hospitality and tourism operations.

4. Regional Workforce Attraction Challenges

Regional destinations reported difficulty attracting applicants willing to **relocate to tourism areas**.

Barriers include:

- Limited housing availability
- Remoteness
- Smaller labour markets.

One respondent noted:

- *“There is a severe shortage of suitable housing, which significantly impacts recruitment... even when qualified applicants have been successfully attracted.”*

Other comments highlighted the difficulty attracting workers to regional tourism businesses due to location:

- *“Applicants are not ready to work full time because of the location.”*
- *“The remoteness of the area makes it difficult to attract workers.”*

These challenges were particularly evident in Outback Queensland, Tropical North Queensland, and island destinations.

5. Visa Settings Limiting Workforce Supply

Employers also identified **policy settings affecting labour supply**, particularly regarding working holiday visas.

One respondent highlighted:

- *“Many backpackers actively seek work that counts toward their 88 days... tourism and hospitality roles do not currently qualify.”*

This means that working holiday visa holders often choose agriculture or construction jobs instead of tourism roles, even in regions with labour shortages.

6. Short-Term and Transient Workforce

Some tourism operators reported challenges with temporary or transient workers, particularly backpackers.

One employer noted:

- *“Too many transient workers from overseas – training takes too long to offset the short duration of employment.”*

This creates operational challenges where businesses must repeatedly recruit and train new workers.

7. Skills Gaps in Management and Technical Roles

Employers reported particular difficulty recruiting applicants with higher-level management and operational skills.

One employer noted:

- *“It is difficult to attract applicants who already possess essential higher-level skills such as staff management, leadership, finance and workplace health and safety.”*

These roles are critical to the operation of tourism businesses but often require experienced candidates with industry knowledge.

ADDITIONAL ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY EMPLOYERS

Survey responses also identified several additional applicant challenges:

Wage and expectation mismatch

Some applicants expect salaries above what tourism businesses can offer.

Example:

- *“Maintenance positions have been hard to fill due to salary expectations.”*

Qualification and licensing barriers

Some candidates lack required licences or certifications.

Example:

- *“Applicants expecting the employer to pay for licences and driver authorisation medicals.”*

Language and communication barriers

Particularly relevant in tourism roles requiring customer interaction.

Example:

- *“Language barriers cause safety concerns.”*

Narrow role expectations

Some applicants are unwilling to perform broader tourism duties.

Example:

- *“Only interested in driving a bus – not interested in giving commentary or helping people.”*

KEY INSIGHT

The consultation demonstrates that tourism and hospitality workforce challenges are driven not only by labour shortages, but also by mismatches between the skills, experience, availability and expectations of applicants and the operational needs of tourism businesses.

Employers are frequently receiving applications from candidates who:

- Lack industry experience or technical skills
- Are not job-ready
- Lack work rights
- Are unwilling to relocate to regional tourism areas
- Are not genuinely seeking long-term employment.

These challenges are particularly acute in **regional tourism destinations**, where workforce attraction and housing availability further constrain recruitment.

REGIONAL AVAILABILITY FOR SKILLED WORKERS

AVAILABILITY OF SKILLED WORKERS

Survey responses show clear differences in the availability of suitably skilled workers between metropolitan and regional Queensland. While shortages exist in both contexts, metropolitan shortages are generally concentrated in specialised hospitality occupations, whereas regional Queensland experiences broader workforce shortages across management, culinary and tourism roles.

Across the consultation, occupations were assessed as severe undersupply, undersupply, about right, or oversupply. Most tourism and hospitality occupations were identified as either severely undersupplied or undersupplied, confirming persistent workforce shortages across the sector.

METROPOLITAN QUEENSLAND – AVAILABILITY OF SKILLED WORKERS

In metropolitan Queensland, shortages are most pronounced in culinary and hospitality leadership roles.

Culinary Occupations

Culinary roles recorded the highest levels of workforce shortage.

Chef

- 83% of responses indicated severe undersupply
- 8% indicated undersupply
- 8% reported availability as about right

This indicates that chefs remain one of the most critically undersupplied occupations in metropolitan hospitality operations.

Cook

- 73% severe undersupply
- 9% undersupply
- 18% about right

While cooks are slightly more available than chefs, the majority of responses still indicate a significant shortage.

Pastrycook

- 80% severe undersupply
- 20% about right

Employers noted that pastry chefs represent a highly specialised occupation with a limited talent pool.

Senior Chef

Where identified separately in the survey, Senior Chef roles were consistently described as severely undersupplied, with employers reporting difficulty recruiting experienced kitchen leaders capable of managing operations, supervising staff and maintaining food standards.

This suggests that while some entry-level kitchen workers may be available, experienced culinary professionals remain in very short supply.

HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT ROLES

Several hospitality management occupations also show strong shortages.

Café or Restaurant Manager

- 56% severe undersupply
- 33% undersupply
- 11% about right

Accommodation and Hospitality Managers

- 38% severe undersupply
- 63% undersupply

Hospitality, Retail and Service Managers

- 29% severe undersupply
- 57% undersupply
- 14% about right

These results highlight the difficulty recruiting experienced hospitality managers with operational and leadership capability.

FRONTLINE HOSPITALITY ROLES

Frontline service roles recorded more moderate shortages.

Barista

- 43% severe undersupply
- 14% undersupply
- 43% about right

Waiter

- 40% undersupply
- 50% about right
- 10% oversupply
- Hotel Receptionist
- 100% undersupply

While labour supply appears somewhat more balanced for some service roles, employers still report difficulty recruiting experienced workers capable of delivering high-quality visitor service.

REGIONAL QUEENSLAND – AVAILABILITY OF SKILLED WORKERS

Regional Queensland shows broader and more persistent workforce shortages, affecting both operational and leadership roles.

Regional tourism businesses face additional recruitment challenges including smaller labour markets, housing constraints and difficulty attracting workers willing to relocate.

HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT ROLES

Management roles show particularly strong shortages.

Accommodation and Hospitality Managers

- 37% severe undersupply
- 47% undersupply
- 16% about right

Hotel or Motel Managers

- 20% severe undersupply
- 67% undersupply
- 13% about right

Café or Restaurant Managers

- 46% severe undersupply
- 46% undersupply
- 8% about right

These roles are essential for the operation of regional tourism businesses but require experienced candidates who are often difficult to attract to regional areas.

CULINARY OCCUPATIONS

Culinary occupations remain among the most severely undersupplied roles in regional tourism destinations.

Chef

- 64% severe undersupply
- 36% undersupply

Cook

- 50% severe undersupply
- 42% undersupply
- 8% about right

Pastrycook

- 100% severe undersupply

Senior Chef

Regional businesses also reported extreme difficulty recruiting Senior Chefs, reflecting the need for experienced culinary professionals capable of running kitchens and mentoring junior staff.

Employers noted that experienced chefs are particularly difficult to attract to regional areas, where housing availability and smaller labour pools limit recruitment.

FRONTLINE HOSPITALITY ROLES

Regional employers also reported shortages in several service occupations.

Barista

- 36% severe undersupply
- 55% undersupply
- 9% about right

Hotel Receptionist

- 80% undersupply
- 10% about right
- 10% oversupply

Waiter

- 71% undersupply
- 29% about right

TOURISM AND VISITOR ECONOMY ROLES

Regional shortages extend beyond hospitality into tourism-specific occupations.

Tour Guide

- 67% undersupply
- 33% about right

Tourist Information Officer

- 75% undersupply
- 25% about right

These occupations are critical in tourism-dependent destinations where visitor experiences rely heavily on local knowledge and guiding expertise.

KEY INSIGHTS

Several workforce trends emerge from the consultation:

Metropolitan Queensland

Workforce shortages are concentrated in culinary and hospitality leadership roles.

Skill and experience gaps remain significant, particularly for Senior Chefs and managers.

Regional Queensland

Workforce shortages are more widespread and systemic.

Regional businesses struggle to attract experienced workers across both management and operational roles.

Across both metropolitan and regional Queensland, the occupations most consistently identified as undersupplied include:

- Senior Chef
- Chef
- Cook
- Café or Restaurant Manager
- Accommodation and Hospitality Managers
- Hotel or Motel Managers

These occupations form the operational backbone of the tourism and hospitality sector and represent critical workforce priorities.

COMPARISON OF DEMAND VS AVAILABILITY OF SKILLED WORKERS

Analysis of the consultation results shows strong alignment between high demand for workers and limited availability of suitably skilled applicants across several tourism and hospitality occupations. This alignment confirms that workforce shortages in the sector are structural rather than temporary, particularly in regional Queensland where tourism businesses face additional labour market constraints.

Occupations experiencing the greatest labour shortages are those where both demand and availability indicators report severe undersupply or consistent undersupply.

METROPOLITAN QUEENSLAND

In metropolitan Queensland, demand and availability trends are closely aligned for core hospitality occupations, particularly culinary and hospitality management roles.

CULINARY ROLES

Culinary occupations demonstrate the strongest alignment between demand and availability shortages.

Senior Chef

Senior chef roles were also reported as severely undersupplied, highlighting the difficulty recruiting experienced culinary professionals capable of managing kitchen operations and supervising staff.

These findings indicate shortages across the entire kitchen hierarchy, particularly for experienced chefs.

Hospitality Management Roles

Hospitality leadership roles also show strong alignment between demand and workforce availability.

Café or Restaurant Manager

- Demand: 90% undersupply or severe undersupply
- Availability: 89% undersupply or severe undersupply

Accommodation and Hospitality Managers

- Demand: 100% undersupply or severe undersupply
- Availability: 100% undersupply or severe undersupply

These roles require operational, financial and staff management capability and are increasingly difficult to recruit.

MARINE TOURISM OCCUPATIONS – METROPOLITAN QUEENSLAND

Although marine tourism occupations appear less frequently in metropolitan responses, the available data indicates very limited labour supply for specialised marine roles.

Ship's Master

Availability responses indicate:

- 100% of responses identified severe undersupply

Demand responses indicate:

- 100% of responses identified undersupply or severe undersupply

Marine Transport Professional

Availability responses indicate:

- 100% undersupply

Demand responses indicate:

- 100% undersupply

Deck Hand

Availability responses indicate:

- 100% undersupply

Demand responses indicate:

- 50% undersupply
- 50% about right

These results indicate that even where demand volumes are smaller, the available workforce pool for marine tourism occupations is extremely limited, reflecting the specialised nature of these roles.

REGIONAL QUEENSLAND

Regional Queensland shows a broader mismatch between demand and workforce availability, reflecting structural labour market constraints in tourism destinations.

Shortages extend across hospitality, tourism services, transport and marine tourism occupations.

Hospitality Management Roles

Hospitality leadership roles show strong alignment between demand and availability shortages.

Accommodation and Hospitality Managers

- Demand: 75% severe undersupply
- Availability: 84% undersupply or severe undersupply

Hotel or Motel Managers

- Demand: 62% undersupply or severe undersupply
- Availability: 87% undersupply or severe undersupply

Café or Restaurant Managers

- Demand: 100% undersupply or severe undersupply
- Availability: 92% undersupply or severe undersupply

These results highlight the difficulty regional tourism businesses face recruiting experienced managers.

Culinary Occupations

Regional culinary shortages remain among the most severe workforce gaps.

Chef

- Demand: 69% severe undersupply
- Availability: 64% severe undersupply

Cook

- Demand: 64% severe undersupply
- Availability: 50% severe undersupply

Senior Chef

Senior chefs were also reported as severely undersupplied, reflecting the difficulty attracting experienced culinary professionals to regional tourism destinations.

MARINE TOURISM OCCUPATIONS – REGIONAL QUEENSLAND

Marine tourism roles demonstrate particularly strong shortages in regional coastal tourism destinations, where businesses rely heavily on marine-based tourism experiences.

Ship's Master

Demand responses indicate:

- 100% severe undersupply

Availability responses indicate:

- 100% severe undersupply

This highlights a critical shortage of qualified vessel operators.

Ship's Engineer

Demand responses indicate:

- 100% severe undersupply

Availability responses indicate:

- 100% severe undersupply

Ship engineers represent one of the most specialised occupations in the dataset, with very limited workforce availability.

Marine Transport Professional

Demand responses indicate:

- 100% severe undersupply

Availability responses indicate:

- 100% undersupply

Deck Hand

Demand responses indicate:

- 100% undersupply

Availability responses indicate:

- 100% undersupply

These occupations are essential for tourism experiences such as:

- Reef tours
- Dive operations
- Charter boat services
- Island transfers.

The data indicates that both demand and availability constraints exist simultaneously, suggesting structural shortages in marine tourism workforce supply.

Key Insights

The comparison between demand and availability highlights several workforce trends.

Structural shortages in core hospitality occupations

The strongest alignment between demand and availability shortages occurs in:

- Senior Chef
- Chef
- Cook
- Café or Restaurant Manager
- Accommodation and Hospitality Managers
- Hotel or Motel Managers

These roles represent the operational backbone of tourism and hospitality businesses.

Marine tourism workforce shortages

Marine tourism occupations demonstrate specialised workforce shortages, particularly in regional tourism destinations.

The most significant shortages occur in:

- Ship's Master
- Ship's Engineer
- Marine Transport Professional
- Deck Hand

These roles require specialised maritime licences, safety certifications and operational experience, which significantly limits the available labour pool.

Regional shortages are broader and more severe

Regional tourism destinations experience shortages across a wider range of occupations, including:

- Hospitality management
- Culinary roles
- Tourism service occupations
- Marine tourism roles.

This reflects additional recruitment barriers including smaller labour markets, housing constraints and difficulty attracting skilled workers to regional tourism destinations.

MIGRATION PATHWAYS

Migration plays a critical role in supporting workforce supply across Queensland's tourism and hospitality sector, particularly in occupations experiencing persistent labour shortages. The consultation results indicate that while existing migration pathways support some key occupations, gaps remain between migration policy settings and the workforce needs of tourism businesses, particularly in specialised tourism roles and regional destinations.

METROPOLITAN QUEENSLAND

Temporary visa holders, including Working Holiday Makers and international students, represent an important component of the tourism and hospitality workforce in Queensland's metropolitan tourism regions. However, several barriers can limit their ability to participate fully in the workforce. Targeted measures could improve workforce stability and support tourism businesses experiencing labour shortages in metropolitan destinations.

HOUSING AND ACCOMMODATION SUPPORT

Access to affordable accommodation is a significant challenge for temporary workers in metropolitan areas.

Possible actions include:

- Encouraging development of short-term workforce accommodation
- Supporting partnerships between tourism businesses and property providers
- Promoting medium-term rental options (3–6 month leases) that suit temporary workers.

Stable housing arrangements would help improve worker retention and support tourism businesses in metropolitan destinations where accommodation availability can be limited.

INCREASED WORK FLEXIBILITY FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Recognition of Tourism Work Under the Working Holiday Maker Program

Work in tourism and hospitality in metropolitan regions does not typically count toward the specified work requirement for second or third Working Holiday visas.

Consideration could be given to recognising tourism and hospitality roles in major tourism destinations as eligible specified work.

This would help encourage more Working Holiday Makers to work in tourism roles rather than shifting to other sectors solely to meet visa extension requirements.

TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

Temporary visa holders working in metropolitan tourism areas often rely on public transport.

Improving late-night public transport services and connections between worker accommodation and tourism precincts would help support workers in hospitality roles that require evening and weekend shifts.

Why:

Marine tourism is a core component of Queensland's visitor economy, particularly in reef and coastal tourism destinations. These roles require specialised maritime licences and operational experience, significantly limiting the available labour pool.

STRENGTHEN REGIONAL WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION THROUGH TEMPORARY VISA SETTINGS

Consider increasing allowable working hours for international students employed in tourism and hospitality and extending the period that Working Holiday Makers can work for the same employer when undertaking eligible tourism and hospitality roles.

For example:

extending the allowable employment period with one employer to approximately 185 days (six months) for workers contributing to the 88-day specified work requirement for second or third Working Holiday visas.

Extending employment periods would provide greater workforce stability for tourism and hospitality businesses and increase certainty for property owners and real estate providers offering six-month residential leases, particularly in regions experiencing accommodation shortages.

Why:

Regional tourism businesses face structural labour shortages due to smaller labour markets and challenges attracting workers to regional areas. Greater flexibility within temporary visa programs would help support workforce stability and improve worker retention in regional tourism destinations.

OVERALL POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this consultation demonstrate that workforce shortages across Queensland's tourism and hospitality sector are structural, persistent, and increasingly complex, particularly in regional tourism destinations.

While current migration settings support some core hospitality occupations, they do not fully align with the operational workforce needs of the tourism industry, particularly for frontline tourism roles and specialised occupations such as marine tourism. At the same time, restrictions within temporary visa programs and ongoing housing constraints continue to limit workforce participation and retention.

- Addressing these challenges will require a more coordinated and responsive workforce policy approach, including:
- Expanding migration pathways to better reflect tourism workforce demand, particularly for tourism service and marine tourism occupations
- Increasing flexibility within temporary visa programs, including work rights for international students and employment duration settings for Working Holiday Makers
- Strengthening regional workforce attraction and retention initiatives, including access to suitable workforce accommodation
- Supporting training and skills development pathways for specialised tourism occupations.

Aligning migration, training and regional workforce policies with the needs of the tourism sector will be critical to addressing ongoing labour shortages and ensuring the long-term sustainability, resilience and competitiveness of Queensland's visitor economy.

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL INDUSTRY FEEDBACK

In addition to the structured survey responses, industry stakeholders provided further comments outlining broader workforce challenges affecting tourism and hospitality businesses across Queensland. These responses highlight several structural issues impacting recruitment, retention and workforce stability.

A consistent theme across responses was the difficulty attracting and retaining experienced workers, particularly in regional destinations. Employers reported that while applicants may be available, many lack the practical experience, qualifications or job readiness required for tourism and hospitality roles.

Housing availability was also identified as a major barrier to workforce attraction, particularly in regional and coastal tourism destinations. Employers noted that even when suitable candidates are identified, limited access to affordable accommodation can prevent workers from relocating or accepting employment.

Stakeholders also highlighted challenges associated with temporary visa settings, including limitations on working hours for international students and restrictions affecting Working Holiday Makers. These settings can reduce workforce stability for businesses that rely on temporary visa holders to fill operational roles.

In addition, employers noted shortages in several specialised tourism occupations, particularly in marine tourism and visitor experience roles where training pathways and migration options are limited.

Overall, the additional feedback reinforces the findings of the survey data, indicating that tourism workforce shortages are influenced not only by labour supply but also by broader structural factors including housing availability, visa settings and limited training pipelines.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the additional industry feedback, several policy actions could help address workforce challenges across the tourism and hospitality sector.

EXPAND MIGRATION PATHWAYS FOR TOURISM AND MARINE OCCUPATIONS

Migration programs should better reflect the workforce needs of the tourism sector by expanding eligibility to include tourism service and marine tourism occupations where shortages exist.

This would support businesses having trouble recruiting workers with specialised skills or licences.

INCREASE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYER INCENTIVES

Increase the Federal Government employer and apprentice incentives for apprenticeships and traineeships within the SIT Training Package Qualifications and tourism and hospitality occupations. Namely chefs, cooks, tour guides, travel advisors and consultants and hospitality managers. (it has declined from \$5,000 to a maximum of \$2,500 per year employer incentive over 1 year for a 3-year chef apprenticeship.

EXTEND WHM 88-DAY REQUIREMENT

Extend the WHM 88-day requirement to at least 182 days to allow participants to commit to six-month stay. This would support more stable accommodation and employment arrangements, benefiting employers and accommodation providers alike. It would reduce the need to retrain staff every three months, lower turnover-related costs, and help maintain consistent occupancy. Overall, this approach would provide greater certainty and confidence for employers, accommodation providers, and lessees. This is especially important in regional locations with limited accommodation.

INCREASE FLEXIBILITY FOR TEMPORARY VISA HOLDERS WORKING IN TOURISM

Consider increasing allowable working hours for international students employed in tourism and hospitality and reviewing employment restrictions for Working Holiday Makers to improve workforce stability.

Greater flexibility would help tourism businesses better utilise temporary visa holders already living and working in Australia.

INCREASE THE NUMBER OF WORKING HOURS FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Increase the number of working hours for international students from 48 hours per fortnight to an open-ended amount of hours, with a caveat that students must adhere to study hours requirements as per Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE).

SUPPORT WORKFORCE ACCOMMODATION INITIATIVES

Policies supporting short- to medium-term workforce accommodation should be considered in tourism regions experiencing housing shortages.

Encouraging partnerships between tourism businesses, local governments and property providers could improve access to housing for workers relocating to tourism destinations.

STRENGTHEN TRAINING PATHWAYS FOR SPECIALISED TOURISM ROLES

Additional training and skills development opportunities should be developed for specialised tourism occupations, including marine tourism roles and visitor experience positions.

Strengthening training pipelines would help build a more sustainable workforce for the tourism industry.

SUPPORT REGIONAL WORKFORCE ATTRACTION INITIATIVES

Programs designed to attract workers to regional tourism destinations should continue to be supported and expanded.

This may include incentives for relocation, improved workforce accommodation, and targeted regional workforce development initiatives.

APPENDIX A: INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS

- Acacia Motel 'More than a Bed'
- Adels Grove
- Adrenalin Snorkel and Dive
- Alex Seaside Resort
- Amora Hotel
- Australian Adventure Tourism Group
- Australian Age of Dinosaurs
- Australian Butterfly Sanctuary
- Australian Events Marketing
- Ayr Traveller's Motel
- BLT (QLD) Pty Ltd
- Blue Bus Tours
- Boulevard Property Management
- Bundaberg Tourism
- Cairns Aquarium & Reef Research Centre Pty Ltd
- Cairns Aquarium Development Corporation Pty Ltd (trading as Squires Loft Cairns)
- Cape Gloucester Resort
- Cape York Motorcycle Adventures
- Clean Cruising
- Coast Entertainment
- Crystalbrook Collection
- Cunnamulla Tourist Park
- Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary
- Daintree Discovery Centre
- Entrada Travel Group TNQ
- Fraser Dingo 4WD Adventures
- Hotel Chino
- ISail Whitsundays
- InterContinental Hayman Great Barrier Reef
- Lawn Espresso
- Lone Pine Koala Sanctuary
- Longreach Motor Inn
- Mandingalbay Authentic Indigenous Tours
- Mariners North Holiday Apartments
- Marlin Waters Beachfront Apartments
- MI Ride
- Ovolo
- Pacific Hotel Cairns
- Palm Bay Resort
- Paradise Resort
- Pippies Beachhouse
- Point Hotel
- Pullman Cairns International
- Quest Robina
- Ravensbourne Escape
- Redlands Coast Museum
- River City Cruises
- Sail Inn Motel
- Sailing in Paradise
- Scarborough Harbour Brewing Co
- SeaLink
- Simply Beans
- Sparrowly Group
- Sunreef Mooloolaba
- Thala Beach Nature Reserve
- The Burlington Holiday Apartments
- The Folly
- The Reef Retreat Hotel, Palm Cove
- Tranquil Getaways On Obi Maleny
- Travello
- Trip Motel Gatton
- Tropic Tours
- Urban Tours
- Weipa Campground
- Wildside Adventures
- Yarraman Caravan Park and Cabins
- Skybury

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