Using immigration to build the Northern Territory tourism workforce

This fact sheet has examples of the various visa categories by which organisations in the Northern Territory can access international migrant employees as well as some stories of success.

Utilising the local workforce is the preferred option however the experience of Northern Territory tourism organisations suggests that other options are required to fill vacancies.

Further information is available on the website: http://www.immi.gov.au or contact the Northern Territory Regional Outreach Officer: outreach.nt@immi.gov.au

Working holiday maker (417) visa
Travellers can supplement their holiday budget by working in short-term appointments. Travellers between 18 & 30 years may:
• stay up to 12 months
• leave and re-enter Australia any number of times while the visa is valid
• work in Australia for up to six months with each employer
Travellers may be granted one more visa and may work up to 6 months for any previous employer.

Special category (444) visa (New Zealand)
This visa is automatically granted to New Zealand citizens who arrive in Australia who do not hold a permanent visa. They can live and work in Australia for up to 5 years.

Regional sponsored migration scheme (187) visa
This visa is for skilled workers from outside Australia or skilled temporary residents who live and work in regional Australia, who are under 50 years and have the support of an employer. It has 3 streams:
1. Workers with a 457 visa, who have worked for 2 years and their employer wants to offer them a permanent position.
2. People who have never, or only briefly, worked in the Australian labour market.
3. For those sponsored by an employer through a labour or regional migration agreement.

Occupational trainee (402) visa
This visa is for people outside Australia to undertake occupational training and professional development with a business or government agency. Programs should be for at least 30 hours a week and at least 70 per cent workplace-based.

Lasseters Hotel Casino, Alice Springs
With nearly half of the current workforce being migrant workers, Lasseters values staff who work under the various visas very highly, according to human resources manager Glenn Kitto. The majority of employees that are on visas hold entry level, low skilled positions.

“We rely heavily on the Working Holiday Maker (WHM) visa. People who work with us under that visa are usually in back of house positions such as housekeeping and cleaning.”

He said people on the WHM visa are usually committed to the job, right from the start.

“It might be because they have planned to work when they made the decision to travel so they accept the role they have taken on.”

The New Zealand Citizen visa is another option that is used to fill vacancies at Lasseters.

Reputation is important to recruitment and organisations such as Lasseters are able to source these staff via the local community word-of-mouth.

“We also fill a few vacancies under the Occupational Trainee Visa and a small percentage under the Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme for specialist positions such as cooks.

“The Seasonal Workers Program is another option however my experience to date has been that the approval process is very slow – this causes major delays between recruitment and actual appointment.”

Overall, Glenn observed, Lasseters sees migrant workers as essential to their business.

“It would be extremely difficult to fill our vacancies without migrant workers.”

Unfortunately the current WHM visa provisions, allowing only a maximum of six months with any one employer, adds considerable cost and means that Lasseters are continually recruiting – fortunately there is a solid pool of working holiday makers to draw from.

Contact Glenn Kitto, Lasseters Hotel Casino, Alice Springs on +61 8 8950 7776 or Glenn.Kitto@lasseters.com.au
Work and holiday (462) visa
With the same conditions as 417, travellers from specific countries are eligible to work for up to 12 months - Argentina, Bangladesh, Chile, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Turkey, the USA and Iran.

Seasonal Worker Program (416) visa
Allows an Approved Employer to sponsor people from the Pacific and East Timor to work as seasonal workers in the accommodation industry.
Seasonal workers can:
• work in Australia for up to 6 months over a 12 month period
• work in unskilled and low skilled occupations
• work only with the sponsor

Sponsors must:
• arrange suitable accommodation
• pay workers in accordance with award
• pay return airfares upfront and recoup a proportion of cost from workers
• must maintain private health insurance
• assist with initial living expenses.

International student visas
Students on an international student visa can work up to 40 hours a fortnight while their course is in session and they can work unlimited hours during scheduled course breaks.

Temporary work - skilled (457) visa
A business can sponsor a skilled worker for up to 4 years, if a person with those skills cannot be found in Australia. The process can be complex.
The employee:
• can bring their family and travel in and out of Australia as often as needed
• must have skills, qualifications and experience to match the position
• must demonstrate English language ability
• must be are eligible for any required licences or registrations
• must have health insurance.

Labour Agreements
Under this agreement the employer must fill positions in accordance with the terms and conditions specified in the Labour Agreement signed with DIAC.
The nominee must meet the qualifications and skills (including English language skills) specified in the Labour Agreement and be under 50 years of age.
Labour Agreements are intended for occupations that are not on the list of approved occupations for other sponsored visas or occupations not covered under ANZSCO.
A template Labour Agreement has been proposed for the tourism and hospitality industry to improve industry access to semi and highly skilled overseas workers in occupations identified as being in critical shortage.

ON TOURnt
With specialised knowledge of the landscape, its peoples and history, On TOURnt offers dedicated and multilingual guides for an unparalleled experience in the Red Centre.

Australian-owned and operated, the business has in recent years focussed on in-house training of staff.

According to Managing Director Anita Meyer, it has been a challenging time for niche businesses in the multilingual tour guides arena.

“We saw the business grow very positively from 2009 and embraced the requirement for accreditation. We began to employ international staff, to cover the increasing demand.

“New multilingual guides and drivers were trained and preparations for a labour agreement that would enable us to sponsor and employ approved applicants from overseas to cover the increasing demand were commenced.”

Tour Guides are excluded from the Regional Sponsored Migration scheme and are not included the ANZSCO codes that are eligible for the 457 visa so ON TOURnt needed a Labour Agreement to fill vacancies for Tour Guides with the required language skills.

A review of the Tour Guide definition and ANZSCO rating for levels of Tour Guides is currently underway with a view to raising it to level 3, allowing access to 457 and 857 visas subject to criteria regarding training qualifications for guiding.

“We have our very first tour guide under our labour agreement about to start. Setting up a labour agreement is time consuming but once you have a labour agreement in place and all relevant documentation submitted, the process is then very quick.”

Contact Anita Meyer ON TOURnt, Alice Springs on +61 8 89527446 or info@ontournt.com.au