



Australian Government



Seasonal  
Worker  
Program

## Accommodation Sector and the Seasonal Worker Program

Come peak season, hotels in Broome are packed to the brim with holiday-makers, keen to explore the amazing natural beauty of the region. However, a peak season also requires staffing levels to match demand. A lot of accommodation businesses in seasonal locations report uncertainty around labour availability, and reliability. Frequent staff turnover and need for retraining of new staff each season is a costly – in terms of time, administration and financial resources.

Unsatisfied with the status quo, Samantha Warckup, HR Manager at Mercure Broome, decided to investigate alternatives. The investigation culminated in a decision to trial the Seasonal Worker Program – a labour mobility program which allows workers from eight Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste to come and work in Australia when there aren't enough local, Australian workers to fill the vacancies.

Seasonal workers can provide employers in participating industries with access to reliable workforce, able to stay and work in Australia for up to six months. The programme also offers the unique benefit of allowing workers to return season after season - providing the employer with an increasingly experienced workforce. Mercure Broome submitted an application to become an 'Approved Employer' and was subsequently approved. Shortly after, they recruited their first seasonal workers, choosing Timor-Leste as the source country.

Mercure Broome has now recruited seasonal workers for the second year in a row, and increased their intake – using a mix of returning workers and new seasonal workers to complement their local workforce. According to Samantha Warckup, the productivity benefits have been impressive, and the company hasn't looked back since getting involved in the Program.

“The peace of mind knowing that you have a reliable seasonal workforce in place is worth it alone, not to mention the seasonal workers' work ethic”, said Samantha Warckup.

It's not just businesses that are benefitting from the programme either. The impact on seasonal workers' lives cannot be underestimated. For example, the team leader of the Timor-Leste seasonal workers, Nuno, is only 25 and has used the money earned through the Seasonal Worker Program to purchase two hectares of land and cattle back in Timor-Leste to start his own agriculture business.

The Seasonal Worker Program is ongoing for the horticulture sector and is operating nationally. It's also being trialled in the accommodation sector, as well as the aquaculture, cotton and cane sectors in some parts of Australia. For accommodation the trail is available to businesses in Western Australia, the Northern Territory, the Whitsundays and Tropical North Queensland and Kangaroo Island, South Australia.

Seasonal workers can be employed in a variety of occupations within an accommodation business, working as bar attendants, baristas, food and beverage attendants, café workers, garden labourers, housekeepers, kitchen hands and public area cleaners.

If you'd like to find out more about the Seasonal Worker Program and how it can benefit your business, contact the Seasonal Worker Program team on (02) 6240 5234, email [seasonalworker@employment.gov.au](mailto:seasonalworker@employment.gov.au), or visit the website at [www.employment.gov.au/seasonalworker](http://www.employment.gov.au/seasonalworker).