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BACKPACKERS GIVEN GREEN LIGHT TO HELP WITH BUSHFIRE RECOVERY

Foreign backpackers and others on working holiday visas will be able to help bushfire-affected communities get back on their feet following changes announced today by the Morrison Government.

Acting Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs Alan Tudge said the new rules for working holiday visas would be welcome news to farmers and regional businesses.

“These hard-working Australians have been hit by the recent bushfires, but from today they can employ backpackers for six months longer, helping them at a critical time in the recovery effort,” Mr Tudge said

“It means working holiday makers can help rebuild homes, fences and farms, they can get onto properties and help with demolition, land clearing, and repairing dams, roads and railways.”

“This recovery will be driven locally, by local workers and communities. But this will be a massive recovery effort and we want businesses and charitable organisations to have as many boots on the ground as they need.”

The new measures will mean working holiday makers who come to Australia with money to spend, will help boost local economies and also spend money they earn in Australia, in the fire-affected towns where they work.

Minister for Trade, Tourism and Investment Simon Birmingham said these arrangements would provide a much needed boost to fire-affected communities around Australia.

“Every extra working holiday maker that we can get into these communities is one extra visitor to help protect local jobs and keep local businesses alive,” Minister Birmingham said.

“We know tourism businesses in fire-affected communities are doing it tough, and the more tourism dollars that these working holiday makers can inject into these economies, the quicker these businesses can get back on their feet.

“These arrangements build on the Morrison Government’s \$76 million tourism recovery package announced last month to help get tourists back into our fire-affected regions and supporting recovery efforts.”

Emergency Management Minister David Littleproud said those coming to help from overseas will be greeted with open arms.

“They’ll come as holiday makers but will leave as life long friends.”

Summary of working holiday maker (WHM) changes

- The time a WHM can work with the same employer has been extended from six months to 12 months for those assisting with bushfire recovery efforts through a change in policy. This is consistent with arrangements put in place for recovery efforts following Cyclone Debbie in 2017.
- The definition of “specified work” will be revised for the Work and Holiday Maker (subclass 462) visa, to ensure construction work in a disaster declared area is captured. This is consistent with existing arrangements for Working Holiday (subclass 417) visa holders.
- Paid and volunteer disaster recovery work in declared areas impacted in the recent bushfires will count towards the “specified work” needed to apply for a second or third year 417 or 462 visa.

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