

### Attracting Overseas Workers

The AHA has consulted with the Government and opposition on changes to immigration requirements relating the engagement of overseas workers. We raised concerns regarding the tightening of the 457 scheme and lobbied to make it easier for the 4000 overseas students studying at Australian Hotel schools to remain in the country after graduation. Overseas students who graduate with a tertiary qualification will now be able to remain in Australia for up to 18 months after the completion of their course. The AHA has renewed the Chefs Labour Agreement for a further 12 months. Additional work is required to harness the potential of this agreement to meet labour shortages in the industry. The National Office is seeking an extension on the skilled worker category to include Front of house and Food and Beverage Managers.

### OHS and Workers Compensation

The National Office continues to monitor developments in this area across the country.

We are working with suppliers and branches to reduce the OHS risks associated with handling kegs. This will be linked to national standards on manual handling. In addition we are consulting with suppliers to ensure members are aware of their obligations under the new Gas Standards. Guidance information has been developed by the suppliers and was distributed through the Convention edition of OURHotel.

### Annual Leave for Shift Workers

The initial Work Choices legislation provided for an additional weeks leave for "shift workers". There were initial concerns from some members that the definition of "shift worker" may extend this entitlement to a range of new workers in businesses that operated 24 hours. Representations to the Government led to the inclusion of an exemption provision in the amending legislation passed earlier this year. Contact with members indicates that the initial concerns regarding this provision have not materialised. The AHA will continue to monitor the situation and will seek an exemption if required.

## WORKPLACE RELATIONS

The AHA realises that finding quality staff is the major challenge confronting business today. We have developed a comprehensive strategy to assist members find and keep good staff.

The AHA continues to play a leading role in the development of a fair and effective national workplace relations system. We promoted the need to maintain flexibility and collaboration in the workplace.

AHA Branches ran 70 workshops and held 70 tailored consultations over 2007 to explain the new workplace relations laws. We developed a Guide for Staff to explain in plain English the important aspects of the new legislation to employees and undertook an employer survey to assess the workplace flexibility required by the accommodation sector to address labour shortages. These were funded under the Federal Government's Employer Advisory Program.

The AHA made a submission to the Fair Pay Commission Inquiry and the Government consulted the AHA on the changes to the Workplace Relations Act introduced in May. A revamped partnership between the AHA and the newly formed Workplace Authority to promote workplace based agreement making has been established. We have also developed a good working relationship with Nicholas Wilson and senior staff at the Office of the Workplace Ombudsman. A MOU was signed in November to guide our ongoing relationship.

The AHA has developed a constructive dialogue with the LHMU and has had a number of discussions regarding Award Rationalisation and Simplification

## EMPLOYMENT EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The National Office continues to be involved in a range of employment, education and training issues. We have been funded by DEST under the Commonwealth National Skill Shortages Strategy (NSSS) to undertake 2 projects that focus on (i) using regional labour force data to improve the take up of jobs in the industry by young people and (ii) the establishment of a Tourism and Hospitality Management Institute.

A DEWR funded pilot project in Adelaide developed models of best practice to assist people on welfare into jobs in the Tourism and Hospitality industry. This project tested screening tools, identified support strategies as well as areas for possible job redesign to help people make an effective transition back into the workforce. Over 60 people were placed in jobs through this program. A MOU between the AHA and DEWR is being developed to support a national roll out of the program.

The National Office has agreed to work with the AFL SportsReady program to place 100 indigenous trainees from their programs in AHA accommodation hotels across the country. A number of member hotels have indicated that they would like to be involved in this program. The program kicked off in Perth and Sydney in November with the placement of 20 trainees.

The AHA in conjunction with ACCI and several other industry organisations has been successful in winning the tender to support the Service Industries under the Commonwealth's Industry Careers Advisory Program. This program will improve career advice and information to young people through the establishment of Careers Advice Australia.

The National Office participates in a range of forums to ensure that the employment, education and training system is responsive to the needs of the tourism and hospitality industry. We are members of the Reference Group for Service Skills Australia, the ACCI Employment Education and Training Committee and the new Institute of Trade Skills Excellence. We have indicated to both sides of politics that a new arrangement is required to ensure that the future challenges in the labour market are to be addressed. We believe a new industry consultative body is required that (i) provides projections of industry labour force needs and (ii) monitors policy development and service delivery in key areas such as education and training, immigration and welfare to work.