

25 June 2019



Restaurant
& Catering

WES ENCOURAGED BY PM'S PLEDGE

Wes Lambert, the new CEO of the Restaurant & Catering Association, said he was encouraged by the Prime Minister's pledges to slash government red tape to unlock investment and open the door to industrial relations reform.

"Restaurants, cafes and catering companies will be particularly interested in hearing the government's plans to overhaul the vocational training system."

"These businesses like other industry sectors are already struggling with existing skills shortages."

"Unfortunately these shortages were exacerbated by visa changes which saw 457 visas replaced by two new 2-year and 4-year visas which removed a pathway to permanent residence."

"Without access to skilled migrant labour our industry requires both Commonwealth and State governments to have a greater focus on equipping Australian workers with the skills that employers, such as restaurants and cafes, need otherwise our nation is simply shrinking its future economic growth capacity."

The R&CA CEO said he welcomed the Commonwealth government's \$525 million skills package announced in the 2019 budget to fund 80,000 new apprenticeships in industries with skills shortages.

"This significant skills package needs to be part of an integrated policy which would welcome skilled migrants to fill obvious existing gaps in the labour market who can then help our businesses to employ and train more Australians."

The current situation, which has seen:

- a decline in skilled visa applications, both lodged and processed;
- increasing delays in visa processing times; and
- the increased costs associated with the Skilling Australians Fund levy;

has created a powerful disincentive for visa-seekers and sponsoring cafe and restaurant employers to fill existing as well as the expected additional 74,700 jobs by May 2023.

"Such red tape has been an important factor in a 37.9 per cent reduction in the number of primary visas granted in 2017-18 compared to a year earlier and needs to be reversed."



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“If Australia is going to reignite economic growth and sustain its enviable record over the two decades then the Prime Minister should be applauded for recognising that slashing government red tape to unlock investment and open the door to industrial relations reform was a pre-requisite” concluded Wes Lambert.

In terms of industrial relations reform the R&CA CEO said that the Commonwealth should look again at a system where an increasing number of cafes and restaurants are choosing not to open on Sundays and Public Holidays due to casual loadings and penalty rates making it unprofitable to do so.

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MEDIA CONTACT

Julian Harniman

M: 0419 923119

E: julianh@restaurantcater.asn.au

SMALL BUSINESS IS A BIG DEAL