



MEDIA RELEASE
14th March 2022

The Backpacker Youth Adventure Travel Association (BYATA) together with the New Zealand Hostels Association (NZHA) welcome Immigration Minister Chris Faafoi's announcement that the 19,500 Working Holiday Visa (WHV) holders who were not able to venture to New Zealand in 2020 due to border closures will have their visas honoured and are able to come to our shores from today.

This will give a small but welcome boost to the hospitality and tourism sectors who continue to struggle recruiting a workforce with unemployment at record lows. It will also assist the ailing backpacker hostel industry which has seen 55% of its stock close due to the lack of international youth travel brought on by the elongated border closures.

"The benefit that the international youth bring to Aotearoa has been widely acknowledged. The youth not only provide a vital workforce in filling short term seasonal roles, but they also travel deep into regional parts of the country, and travel in the shoulder and off seasons giving greater dispersal of spend compared to other demographics. And they spend most of everything they earn on our shores which provides an economic boost and creates additional jobs," says BYATA Vice Chair Henry Matthews.

NZHA Chair Brett Duncan welcomes the signs of recovery for the beleaguered hostel industry saying, "Our industry has seen 198 closures with national bed numbers dropping from 27,370 in 2019 to just 12440 last month, a 55% decrease. With winter ahead there is still concern from many operators that many working holiday makers will not arrive until late Spring, the traditional time most arrive, which means another 6 months of survival to navigate.

"Nonetheless, it is encouraging that government has acknowledged the importance of the WHV scheme by not only opening up processing of new visas and allowing entry to New Zealand this week ahead of other tourists, but also honouring the visas for those unable to come previously due to the pandemic."

BYATA and NZHA, are encouraged by recent announcements, including government's decision to review the dates for when tourists will be allowed to return.

Henry Matthews says, "We hope to see visitors from Australia from early April, ahead of Easter, and visa-waiver countries by the 1st of May and urge government to announce these dates as soon as possible so the industry can adequately prepare."

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About Backpacker Youth and Adventure Tourism Association - BYATA

BYATA is a not-for-profit association acting as the independent voice of the backpacker and adventure tourism sector of New Zealand. With a growing member base of 130+ members nationwide, BYATA advocates on behalf of our members with relevant stakeholders including Tourism New Zealand, Immigration, Hospitality New Zealand, and more. BYATA empowers our members to make informed business decisions by sharing specific industry related data with our members. New Zealand Hostel Association (NZHA) is a sub-group of BYATA and specialises in offering support and advocating on behalf of New Zealand hostels. Visit BYATA's [website](#) for more information and follow us on [LinkedIn](#).