

Australian Government
NEWS RELEASE

Alexander Downer
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WORKING HOLIDAY ARRANGEMENT WITH ITALY BENEFITS AUSTRALIANS

Working Holiday Makers from Australia and Italy will soon be able to apply for working holiday visas in a new reciprocal arrangement between the two countries.

The Acting Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Gary Hardgrave today welcomed the new arrangement signed in Italy by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, and the Italian Undersecretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Margherita Boniver.

Italy is a welcome addition to this program and its inclusion from 1 January 2004, underlines the close relationship Australia enjoys with Italy.

The arrangement emphasises the importance of people-to-people links between the two countries and will increase the opportunities available to young people to experience other cultures and societies at first hand.

Apart from the strong cultural benefits of the Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program, research shows that it has a positive effect on the Australian economy.

The WHM program boosts tourism and benefits industries that rely heavily on casual labour at peak times, particularly the hospitality, horticultural and rural industries.

People aged between 18 and 30 can apply for working holiday visas for up to 12 months' duration. Work undertaken in Australia must be incidental to the main purpose of holidaying, and work for longer than three months with any one employer is not allowed.

The Working Holiday maker program has expanded to more than 88,500 visas (2002-03) since its introduction in the mid-1970s.

Italy will become the 16th country to sign a reciprocal WHM arrangement. The others are Canada, the Republic of Ireland, Japan, Malta, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, the UK, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Finland, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, Cyprus and Belgium. The agreement with Belgium is expected to come into effect later this year, once the ratification process has been finalised.

Since 1 July 2002, working holiday makers have been able to lodge applications on the Internet. Electronic lodgement allows clients to apply for a visa 24 hours a day, seven days a week, where-ever there is Internet access, even if they do not have easy access to a DIMIA office or if they live in regional or remote locations.

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