



Philip Ruddock MP

Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs

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Finland Joins Working Holiday Maker Program

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The Minister for Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs, Philip Ruddock, today announced that Australia and Finland had agreed to a mutual Working Holiday Maker (WHM) arrangement for young people.

The announcement follows the signing of the arrangement in Helsinki by Mr Ruddock and Finland's Foreign Minister, Erkki Tuomioja. The arrangement will take effect from 1 May 2002.

"The WHM program has been a huge success since its introduction in the mid-1970s, expanding to approximately 76,500 places in 2000-01," Mr Ruddock said.

"The arrangement with Finland is a most welcome addition to the program and is indicative of the strength of the relationship that Australia enjoys with Finland."

Australia now has 13 reciprocal WHM arrangements. The other arrangements are with the United Kingdom, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, Japan, Malta, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Norway and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China.

The WHM arrangement with Finland will allow young citizens of Finland aged between 18 and 30 to apply for Australian Working Holiday visas. Successful applicants will be eligible to holiday in Australia for up to 12 months. Work undertaken must be incidental to the main purpose of holidaying, and work for longer than three months with any one employer is not allowed.

"The WHM scheme promotes international understanding by helping young people experience the cultures of other countries," the Minister said.

The Minister explained that apart from the strong cultural benefits, research showed that working holidaymakers had 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.

"The WHM Program provides employers with access to a pool of people with work rights and discourages the employment of people without permission to work or those who are in Australia unlawfully," Mr Ruddock said.

"Living and working in a country is a great way to learn about its culture and its people. Young people from both Finland and Australia will greatly benefit from the opportunity provided through the new arrangement."

Australia continues to negotiate WHM arrangements with a wide range of countries.

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