

Southern Cross Group E-Bulletin to Members

4 August 2002

Consultation: UK Working Holidaymaker Scheme

Dear Southern Cross Group Friends,

Around 17,000 young Australians go to the United Kingdom on working holidaymaker visas each year. In fact, Australians are the biggest users of the UK scheme which admits around 38,000 young people to Britain annually.

The UK Home Office is currently reviewing the UK Working Holidaymaker Scheme. Comments are invited by the deadline of Friday 23 August 2002.

The Southern Cross Group will be making a short submission to the Home Office, and we welcome your thoughts and suggestions. Please forward this e-mail on to any person or business you think may be impacted by the UK WH Scheme and possible changes to it.

The Home Office consultation document can be downloaded at:

<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/default.asp?PageId=2830>

Details of Australia's reciprocal scheme, and the other countries apart from the UK which admit Australian working holidaymakers, can be found on our website at:

www.southern-cross-group.org

Under the present UK scheme, applicants must be Commonwealth citizens aged 17-27 at the time of entry. They must also be unmarried or married to a person who qualifies for, and intends to take, a working holiday at the same time.

Further, applicants must have the means to pay for a return or onward journey and must be able to maintain and accommodate themselves without recourse to public funds whilst in the UK. Intended employment must be incidental to a holiday and the person must not intend to engage in business, be a professional sportsman or entertainer, or pursue a career in the UK. Applicants must not have any dependant children 5 years of age or over and must intend to leave the UK at the end of the working holiday. At present, working holiday visas for the UK can only be obtained outside the UK, i.e. at British diplomatic posts abroad.

Holders of WH visas may enter the UK for a maximum of two years, and only one WH visa is granted per lifetime.

Only work deemed "incidental to a holiday" is permitted. This is defined as engaging in full-time employment - more than 25 hours a week - for 50% or less of the working holiday. Some professional activity is permitted, such as supply teaching at a relatively junior level, or agency nursing. However, working holidaymakers are not permitted to take up managerial positions, pursue their career, or act as a locum doctor, GP, solicitor or barrister. Some part-time study and short periods of full-time study are allowed.

In general, working holidaymakers are not permitted to remain in the UK beyond their 2-year period for the purpose of employment, although some people are permitted to switch into work permit employment on a case-by-case discretionary basis.

Key issues raised in the Home Office's consultation document include:

Should the maximum age criterion be extended from 27 to 30 years of age?

Should the duration of the entry visa remain 2 years?

Should full-time work be permitted for a longer period of time?

Should work in any job or occupation be permitted? Should any professions be exempted?

Should there continue to be no limit on the time spent with one employer?

How could working holidaymakers be encouraged to leave the UK at the end of their stay where they have not been granted further leave to remain?

Should switching from the WH Scheme into work permit employment be permitted?

Please tell us your thoughts and any experiences you may have had as an individual or as an employer with the existing working holidaymaker scheme so that we can include your input in our submission. E-mail us at info@southern-cross-group.org or call our UK Coordinator Lorraine Buckland in London on +44 20 7584 7268, or Anne MacGregor in Brussels on +32 2 5050 266, by Monday 19 August 2002.

If you wish to make an independent submission directly to the Home Office, it should be addressed to Graham Johnston, Immigration and Nationality Policy Directorate, Room 1101, Apollo House, 36 Wellesley Road, Croydon CR9 3RR, UK, E-mail Graham.Johnston@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk.

Best regards,
The Southern Cross Group Committee
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