

FutureNow.

Accommodation

FutureNow is the Western Australian Training Council for the creative, leisure and technology industries. The Council is a skills advisory body that represents the voice of industry, advising the State Government on the training and workforce development needs of our industry sectors.

Workers engaged in the Accommodation sector provide services to visitors in hotels, serviced apartments, resorts and caravan parks, as well as for workers in the resources sector. It is a significant component of the broader tourism industry with strong links to other sectors including food and beverage venues, events, and tourist activities.

What has happened and where is the sector now?

Current Industry Environment

Barriers to Business

The availability of skilled labour remains the largest barrier facing the WA Business community. 85% of accommodation businesses cited skilled labour shortages as a barrier to growing their business over the coming year. 80% of accommodation providers stated that an uncontrolled outbreak of COVID-19 was identified as the main barrier facing their industry.¹

The unknowns around the Omicron variant have again rattled the accommodation sector and have added yet another layer of uncertainty to economic and tourism recovery.²

The sector's current challenges

Mandatory Vaccinations

Western Australia became the first Australian state to mandate vaccination against COVID-19 for all hotel, motel and workers at any facility providing accommodation services.

In a reclassification by the state government, hotel staff are considered as an 'occupation deemed critical to the ongoing delivery of business and the function of the community'. This requires them to have had their first dose of a TGA-approved vaccine by 31 December 2021 and fully vaccinated by 31 January 2022.³

Workforce challenges

Hotels in the CBD that were primarily used for corporate travellers, are now being used for leisure "staycations" due to the lack of corporate business as a result of border closures. This has resulted in working hours for employees changing from midweek to weekends which attracts fewer potential employees. All hotels are looking for staff from the same pool – industry reports that there is a lot of staff movement amongst hotels.

Industry reports that many hotel General Managers (GM's) are suffering from burnout and fatigue

due to the pressures currently on hotels. The GM's are having to multitask and take on many roles due to the lack of available staff.

The challenge of many accommodation providers is to re invigorate their staff. Accor have introduced an initiative called 'Work your Way'. This has 2 key focuses - one of increasing the agility of their recruitment processes including implementation of same day hire and the other being flexible working arrangements for all staff. ⁴

Where to from here?

Emerging Industry Developments

Perth is expected to see occupancy rates return to 2019 levels by 2023.⁵ The future challenge will be Hotels transitioning from quarantine hotels back to leisure/corporate properties. This will involve deep cleaning of all rooms and public areas, in addition, some hotels will be replacing all bedding.

Where once making cleaning shifts visible throughout the day was avoided by hoteliers, in the future it will be encouraged. The frequency of cleaning will be increased, and this will be made visible to guests seeking reassurance for their own safety.⁶

Regional Areas

In June 2021, Tourism WA (TWA) launched, the 'Wander out Yonder' campaign. This intrastate campaign targeted residents from all over WA and aimed to inspire locals to explore locations they had never been and embark on experiences they had never had.

The Regional chambers of Commerce and Industry WA (RCCIWA) reported that the 'Wander Out Yonder' campaign has been highly successful for the regions. However, the unprecedented demand caused some regional hotel and motels not being able to keep up with the demand due to the lack of staff to service the accommodation rooms. ⁷

The RCCIWA reported that there is a shortage of regional housing availability and rents are extremely high for the small number of rentals that are available. In addition to accommodation shortages there is a shortage of childcare places in the regions which prevents some potential workers being able to accept job opportunities in regional areas.

Operators of caravan and holiday parks are seeing a growth in bookings compared to major city-based hotels. Additionally, eco-lodges and boutique properties in rural areas, smaller towns, and those coastally based are also benefiting from higher levels of demand. This boom is evidenced by the growth in bookings at RAC's nine holiday parks and resorts across WA.⁸

What will it take for recovery and future growth?

New Innovations

As a result of COVID 19, some accommodation providers have discarded buffet breakfasts and around-the-clock room service as well as clearing rooms of any surplus cushions, throw rugs, notepads and menus.

Entry cards have been replaced with digital room keys in many hotels, room service replaced by vending machine meals and carpets removed from rooms being replaced with hardwood floors.

Communal gyms have been replaced with weights and yoga mats delivered to rooms on request. Cleaning processes have also been taken to the highest of standards, with rooms being defogged and sterilised, to give people peace of mind that they are in a safe place. Chronic staff shortages are also a reason for many of these new changes as it is very labour intensive to run hotels, motels and resorts.⁹

Short Stay Accommodation

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries is investigating the implementation of a new state-wide registration system for the currently unregulated short-stay accommodation sector (Airbnb and similar platforms).

Under the proposed registration system, providers of short-term rental accommodation within Western Australia will be required to register their property with Local Governments, to operate and advertise, including on online booking platforms.¹⁰ Industry advises that the reforms are an important step towards ensuring WA's legal and licensed accommodation industry continues to grow as well as safeguarding residential neighbourhood amenity.¹¹

Workforce Drivers

Employment initiatives and Industrial Relations updates

State Priority Occupation List (SPOL) for 2021

The SPOL has recognised the critical skills shortage in the following occupations. It is used to inform and guide workforce planning and development for Western Australia. It is a list of occupations rated according to their priority status for WA; it informs the WA State training plan, which guides the allocation of subsidised training programs into areas of prioritised need. It also informs WA workforce development planning and the Western Australian skilled migration occupation list (WASMOL).

The State priority occupation list for 2021 has listed the following Accommodation occupations:

Occupation	State priority 1	State priority 2
Hotel service Managers	✓	
Hotel and Motel Managers		✓

Skills and Training

ECU International Student program

To assist in addressing the sector's urgent workforce shortage, ECU implemented a project targeting international hospitality/tourism students from various institutions across Western Australia who remained in Western Australian during the pandemic. The purpose was to fast-track their job readiness and enter the hotel industry immediately.

The training expenses such as meals, uniforms and training materials were covered by a grant from Study Perth. During the training period (September to December), students worked across key hotel departments (Front Office, Housekeeping, and Food & Beverage) to gain an in-depth knowledge about hotel operations. At the completion of the course, major hotel operators were invited to a 'job fair' to interview the potential employees, with most students gaining employment in a hotel.¹²

FutureNow

A suite of occupational and pathway guides and a website (<https://www.thecareers.guide/>) were produced by FutureNow to present career pathways information to prospective learners interested in employment in the Tourism and Hospitality industries. These were co-developed by Tourism WA and FutureNow and were used during the Skills West expo in August this year.

FutureNow and TWA have also collaborated on a career promotion program through the appointment of a Hospitality, Tourism and Events Career Advisor. This will involve visits to a number of High schools to promote careers in these industries.

Department of Training and Workforce Development

The Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD) are currently working with the Education department to appoint 70 Career Practitioners in 2022 and are working on a year 9 Career Taster program in an effort to assist students with career choices earlier in their school journey.

Lower Fee Courses and Skill Sets

As a means of removing barriers from undertaking training, free skill set courses were designed to deliver fast track training for jobs in the accommodation sector that do not need a full qualification, to get young people ready for their first job, or re-skill quickly for jobs that are in demand. The skills sets were also designed to offer a pathway to further study. In addition, the following courses were offered 50% off the fees during 2021:

Free courses	Half price courses
Hospitality Service Skill Set	Certificate III in Hospitality
Work in Hospitality Skill Set	
Customer Service Skill Set	

Please get in touch

FutureNow is continually seeking input from stakeholders in the Western Australian accommodation sector. If you are interested in providing further information about the workforce in this sector, please get in touch with the Industry Development Manager:

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References

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