

To Whom it may concern

We are registered WOOF hosts in Pennyroyal, Victoria. We have enjoyed a number of young overseas visitors, staying with us to work on our agroforestry/cattle farm for 4 to 6 hours per day 5 Days a week, in exchange for board and lodging. We enjoyed hosting these enthusiastic young people and many of them have become part of our global family. We should point out that WOOFERS, at least for us, do not displace Australians, who we might otherwise employ: we now simply do the work ourselves and miss out on the pleasure of being exposed to different nationalities and cultures.

In the past, we had many overseas enquiries, both emails and telephone calls, requesting work as a woofers on our farm. Sometimes as many as 10 a week. This number has reduced to zero and we have had no woofers for 2 years.

The problem started when woofers were required to work a 40 hour week for their second year visa. This change and the proposed changes to the taxation of woofers and itinerant agricultural workers (for example, students on working holiday visas picking fruit), have caused a precipitous decline in young people coming to Australia to work and to experience life in Australia. It is worth mentioning that it is my understanding that such people tend to spend more money in Australia than they actually earn, thus making them net contributors on a cash basis in addition to the labour they provide.

The decline in the availability of woofers and young agricultural workers has, of course, caused significant problems for farmers and fruit growers. But almost as importantly has deprived Australia of the opportunity to show many young people what an attractive and vibrant country this is. As I understand it, these people are all now going to New Zealand, which has taken a rather broader view of the benefits to be derived from a steady flow of short term working visitors than we have.

We would strongly urge the government to rethink its attitude to both WOOFERS and the taxation of people on working holidays.