

Farm work in Australia: A once in a lifetime experience

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<p>This thesis looks into farm work in Australia and what the experience is like. Farm work is a huge topic of discussion in Australia between working holiday makers, as well as authorities, as there has been misconduct reported happening on farms in recent years. This is the main reason for doing research on the topic and giving a voice to the working holiday makers, who have been mistreated, as well as to those who have had positive experiences.</p> <p>The main goal of this thesis was to find out what kind of experience farm work in Australia is, by using qualitative research methods. This was done by interviewing six working holiday makers, who have done farm work in the past two years. To understand why these working holiday makers end up working on farms and come to Australia in the first place, both life in Australia and visa regulations are explained in the theoretical part.</p> <p>All of the interviews were conducted in February 2018, in Melbourne Australia. The results showed, that their experiences were hard to deem just as negative, or just as positive. There were multiple aspects that needed to be taken into consideration, when evaluating farm work as an experience. Having heard what the participants had to say and how their experiences were, there were suggestions included in this thesis, on how to improve matters for working holiday makers as well as potential future research ideas.</p>	
Keywords Farm work, Australia, Working Holiday, Exploitation	

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1 Introduction

Farm work in Australia, is considered by many, a once in a lifetime experience. Especially by the ones who have done it, as all of the participants interviewed for this thesis said, it is something they would never do again. The conditions on farms in Australia have been a very current topic in recent years and have been discussed even further in the past year, with the 'backpacker' tax being introduced to working holiday makers. In 2017 there was a reported death of a Belgian backpacker on a farm due to heatstroke and multiple stories of exploitation and a lack of supervision on farms (News.com.au 2017). The following, are quotes from Mark, who worked on a potato farm in Western Australia, and Jen, who worked on a cattle station in central Queensland, and had to live with the farmer as there was no other option. Both of them took part in the interview process of this thesis.

"I enjoyed the actual work for the first month, but the other two not. Mainly because I had to work extremely long hours in heat, about 10 hours a day. Also the farmer was treating the backpackers on the farm really badly and threatening them. One time when I was listening to music while working, he came over yelling and threatening to strangle me." Mark

"I enjoyed the work a lot. But I could not have stayed there with the farmer. He walked around the house naked and he was very sexist, homophobic and racist, and I couldn't stay there listening to the things he was saying." Jen

The idea for this thesis came from stories similar to Mark and Jen's. There were so many, that it was obvious, that this is a very important and current topic that should require the attention of people. The results of this research are based on six interviews, that were conducted while in Australia, in February 2018. The audience, or the people who would benefit from this research, would be future working holiday makers and the authorities of Australia.

1.1 Objectives

The main objective of this thesis is to find out how the experience of farm work in Australia is. The aim is to give a voice to some of the working holiday makers, who have worked on farms and been treated unfairly and been paid below minimum wage, and bring to light some of the negative as well as positive aspects of working in rural Australia. To find out how the experience is, qualitative research methods will be used and there will be interviews conducted to determine the answers.

1.2 Topic of research

The topic of research for this thesis is the 88 days of rural work, working holiday makers need to complete, if they wish to apply for a second year Working Holiday visa in Australia. Farm work, such as vegetable or fruit picking is not the only rural work available, but the vast majority of working holiday makers end up completing their 88 days, doing jobs like these. This is why this research will only focus on farm work. Farm work is a common discussion topic between working holiday makers in Australia and there are multiple negative, as well as positive experiences, while doing this type of work.

1.3 Structure of this thesis

This thesis will start by looking into life in Australia and some of the reasons it draws so many working holiday makers. The main reason working holiday makers end up working on rural farms in Australia, is because that is the only way for them to be granted a second year Working Holiday visa, which Chapter three looks into. It is important to understand how the visa regulations work, to see why someone would go through, what some of the working holiday makers have, while working on farms. Chapter four looks into farm work and what it actually is, where it can be found and some of the exploitation that has been reported happening. Chapter five will include the results and explain, why the specific data collection methods were used, while conducting the interviews. Chapter six is the discussion part of this thesis and will include thoughts about significance, reliability, validity as well as the limitations of the research conducted. Chapter seven will include suggestions on how to make farm work a better experience for future working holiday makers, ideas for future research on the topic and the timeline of this whole thesis.

2 Life in Australia

Australia is one of the most liveable countries in the world. The Economist's Intelligence Unit's annual liveability index survey, which ranks 140 cities worldwide, according to their stability, culture, healthcare, education, environment and infrastructure, ranked all 5 Australian business centres in the top 20 in 2017. Brisbane at 16th, Sydney at 11th, Perth at seventh, Adelaide at equal fifth place with Calgary in Canada and Melbourne, seventh year in a row, was ranked at first place in liveability. (The Guardian 2017.) This chapter looks into Australia as a country and how living in the country is like in general, including healthcare and working life, which are some of the reasons Australia draws many working holiday makers.

2.1 Geography and demographics

Australia is considered the world's largest island and has one of the lowest population densities in the world with only 2.8 inhabitants per km². The population of Australia is 24,7 million (December 2017) and the vast majority of it lives along the south-eastern coast line, as the largest part of Australia is desert or semi-arid and has little to no population. (Migration Expert 2017.) The population density can be observed more visually in figure 1.

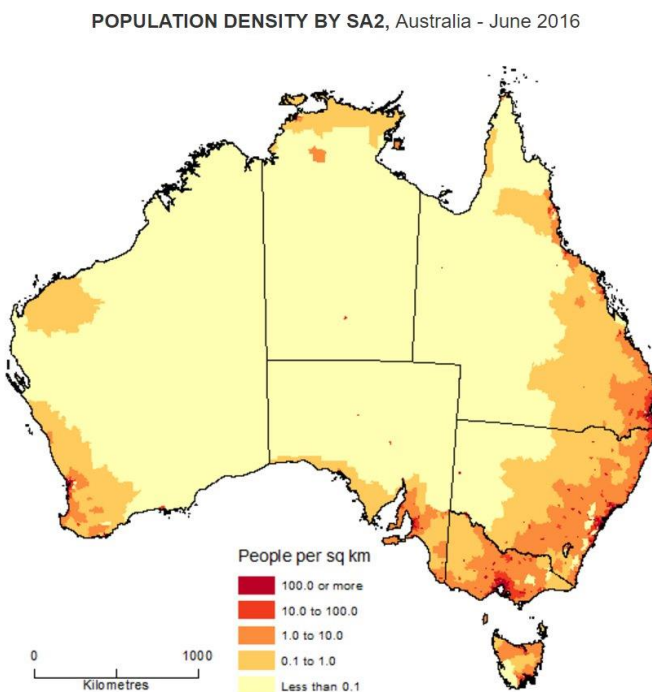


Figure 1. Population Density of Australia (Businessinsider 2017)

Australia has widely ranging nature from exotic coral reefs and sweeping golden beaches to mountain ranges, from huge grazing lands to harsh deserts to modern cities. Australia is often known for one of the world's largest monoliths, Uluru and the world's largest coral reef, The Great Barrier Reef. Being surrounded by the Indian and Pacific Oceans, Australia is rich in diverse plants and animals, many of which are solely found in Australia. This diversity of nature is just one of the reasons Australia draws many working holiday makers. (Migration Expert 2017.)

2.2 General working conditions and healthcare

The working conditions in Australia are frequently considered some of the highest ranking in the world, when looking at worker's rights and minimum wage. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017), adults working full-time in Australia, earn on average A\$1608.40 weekly, making the average hourly wage A\$42.33. The national minimum wage is A\$18.29 per hour, which comes down to A\$694.90 per week when calculated as 38 hours of ordinary work (Fair Work Commission 2017, 2).

The working conditions are regulated by workplace agreements, contracts, awards and federal legislation. The maximum work hours, minimum wage and minimum leave entitlements of all employees in Australia are protected by the Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standard. The average working week in Australia is currently (2017) 38 hours from Monday to Friday. This does however vary significantly across industries and occupations. (Migration Expert 2017.)

Australian residents can earn up to A\$18,200 tax-free and only when earning above the threshold they need to start paying income tax. The percentage is 19% until A\$37,000 and between A\$37,000 – A\$87,000 it is 32,5% + A\$3,572. When earning above A\$87,000 up to A\$180,000 the rate is 37% + A\$19,822 and when earning above A\$180,000 the rate is 45% + A\$54,232. The Australian income year starts on July 1st and ends on June 30th. The tax rate for Australians is different to the working holiday maker tax rate. (Australian Taxation Office 2017.) There were drastic recent changes made to the working holiday maker tax in 2016 – 2017, which will be looked into more closely in chapter 3.7 'Recent changes in taxation and the importance of specified work for the Australian economy'.

Healthcare is widely accessible to all people living in Australia. All permanent residents in Australia pay an additional tax, a Medicare levy, to fund the public healthcare system,

which is comparable to a medical insurance. It entitles them to subsidised or free public hospital care and services by medical practitioners. (Migration Expert 2017.)

Working holiday makers can be eligible for Medicare as well. It is available for those temporary visa holders who live in a country that has a Reciprocal Health Care Agreement with Australia. These countries include Belgium, Finland, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Ireland, Slovenia, Sweden and United Kingdom. (Australian Government Department of Human Services 2017.)

Having reviewed the aspects of what it is in Australia, that draws working holiday makers to come work and travel, such as high salaries and overall liveability, the next chapter looks into the whole Working Holiday maker programme and where the people on working holiday visas are generally from. It looks into the numbers and how the number of working holiday makers has been declining. It also looks into the application process of the visa and how the time spent on farms is calculated, as well as how important the presence of working holiday makers is to Australia.

3 Working Holiday maker programme

The Working Holiday maker programme was introduced in 1975, when it was only available for young people from a few commonwealth countries, The UK, Canada and Ireland. Between 1980 and 2006, the programme included many other partner countries, such as South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and numerous European nations. The largest number of entrants today come from the United Kingdom. Followed by, Germany, South Korea, France and Taiwan. (Parliament of Australia 2016.) This can be observed in table 3. This chapter looks into the numbers and statistics of the Working Holiday maker programme as well as the taxation of backpackers, the importance of the program to Australia and how the program works in general.

3.1 General information on the Working Holiday maker programme

There were 211,011 Working Holiday Maker visa applications granted in total in the year 2016 – 2017, as can be viewed in Table 1. The two types of visas available in Australia's Working Holiday Maker programme are Working Holiday visa in Subclass 417 and Work and Holiday visa in Subclass 462. Which visa one is eligible for, depends on the country of residence. When applying for either visa, one must be outside Australia and meet certain health, character and financial requirements as well as declare that he/she will obey Australian laws and respect Australian values before the visa is granted. (Australia.com 2017.) When lodging the visa application one must also pay a fee of A\$440 (Homeaffairs 2017).

Table 1. Visas granted (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2017, 26)

Year (July – June)	Total number of Working Holiday Maker visa applications granted
2014 - 2015	226,812
2015 - 2016	214,583
2016 - 2017	211,011

Australia has an overarching bilateral arrangement with each of the current 39 partner countries. Of the 39 partner countries, 19 are Working Holiday, and 20 are Work and Holiday arrangements. The main differences between the two visas are, that there is a certain

previously decided number of Work and Holiday visas granted annually, and additional eligibility requirements. These eligibility requirements include functional English, successful completion of at least two years of undergraduate university studies (excluding Israel and USA) and a letter of home government support in association with their visa application (excluding China, Israel and USA). WHM arrangements are generally reciprocal, meaning Australians will have similar opportunities in partner countries (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2017, 7.) Both 417 and 462 visas allow work in all types of voluntary, casual, shift, part-time and full-time jobs for up to 12 months but no longer than six months for one employer, with just a few exceptions (Australia.com 2017). These exceptions include working as an au pair and being employed in a few industries in northern Australia, such as agriculture, mining, construction, tourism and hospitality and aged and disability care (Parliament of Australia 2016).

3.2 Working Holiday visa (subclass 417)

Passport holders from the following countries who are at least 18 but not yet 31 can be eligible for the Working Holiday Visa: United Kingdom, Canada, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Ireland, Republic of Cyprus, Republic of Korea, Sweden and Taiwan (Australia.com 2017). There were 191,955 subclass 417 visas in total granted between July 1st 2016 and June 30th 2017 as can be observed in Table 2.

Table 2. Number of 417 visas granted (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2017, 26)

Year (July – June)	Total number of Working Holiday (subclass 417) visa applications granted
2014 - 2015	214,830
2015 - 2016	195,673
2016 - 2017	191,955

Overall the vast majority of visas are granted to applicants from the United Kingdom. Residents from the UK made up 21 % of all the 417 Working Holiday visas granted in 2016 - 2017, which can be observed in Table 3. The second highest number of visas is granted to residents of Germany with close to 26,000 first Working Holiday visas in 2016 - 2017. It is visible, that the popularity of a second Working Holiday visa for Germans is a lot less

than for other nationalities, with Germans not making the top seven in popularity of the second year, which can be observed in Table 8.

Table 3. Number of 417 visas granted, 7 most popular countries (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2017, 30)

Country of Citizenship	2014 – 2015	2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017
United Kingdom	44,175	42,175	40,382
Germany	26,327	25,980	25,704
South Korea	25,589	22,025	22,412
France	23,375	21,527	22,361
Taiwan	26,648	22,157	21,639
Italy	14,138	11,591	11,111
Japan	11,481	12,304	11,061

It is visible, when observing Table 3, that there is a clear annual drop in the numbers of backpackers entering Australia, regardless of nationality. There is also a significant drop between Taiwan, the 5th most popular country to enter Australia with a first Working Holiday visa, and the 6th, Italy. In the year 2016 – 2017 there were over 21,000 working holiday makers from Taiwan and just a little over 11,000 from Italy.

3.3 Work and Holiday visa (subclass 462)

Passport holders from the following countries who are at least 18 but not yet 31, can be eligible for the Work and Holiday visa: Argentina, Bangladesh, Chile, People's Republic of China, Hungary, Indonesia, Israel, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Peru, Poland, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, USA, Uruguay and Vietnam (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2017).

Table 4. Number of Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visa applications granted (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2017, 28)

Year (July – June)	Number of Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visa applications granted
2014 – 2015	11,982
2015 - 2016	18,910
2016 - 2017	19,056

In the year 2016 - 2017 there were 19,056 Work and Holiday visas granted in total, which can be observed in Table 4. Out of all the 20 nationalities eligible for a Work and Holiday, USA and China were the most popular countries to enter Australia from. These two countries alone make up over half of all the Work and Holiday visas granted. Americans making up 41,5 % and China 26,8 %. These numbers are observable in Table 5.

Table 5. Number of Work and Holiday visas granted between 2015 -2017 (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2017, 31)

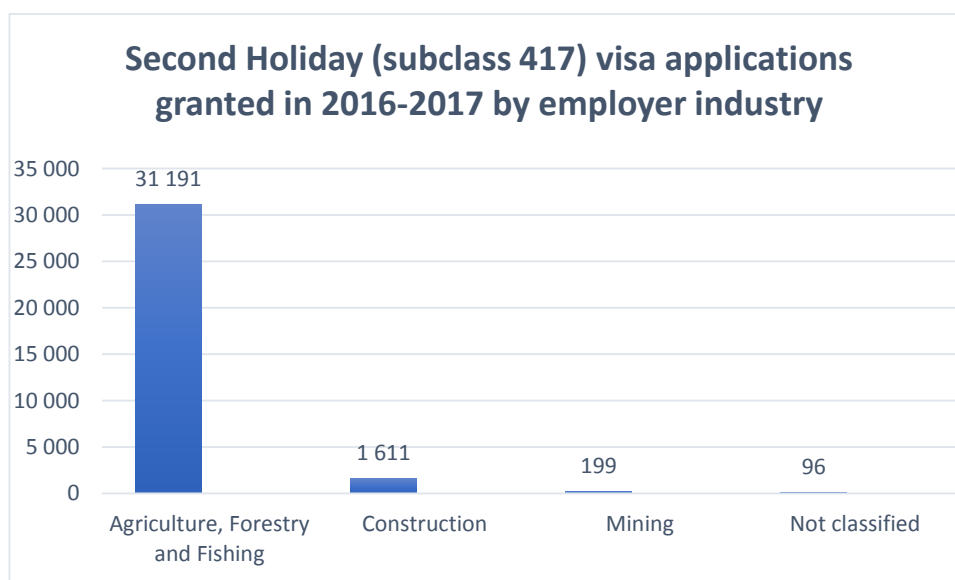
Country of citizenship	2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017
United States of America	8,669	7,792
China, Peoples Republic of	5,000	5,189
Chile	1,500	1,563
Indonesia	776	1,051
Argentina	700	716
Spain	504	608
Israel	401	500

3.4 Applying for a second year on subclass 417 visa

When applying for a second Work and Holiday visa, one must have completed three months of specified subclass 462 work in northern Australia, above the Tropic Of Capricorn. This work must have been completed while on the first Work and Holiday visa. Specified work when one is on a 462 visa, is work that is undertaken in a designated area in northern Australia in a 'specified' field or industry. Industries that are approved as specified work include tourism and hospitality, plant and animal cultivation, fishing and pearling

and tree farming and felling. So just like with the 417 Working Holiday visa, harvesting and packing of fruit and vegetable crops or pruning and trimming vines and trees would go under plant and animal cultivation, and would also be approved as 'specified work'. In addition, tourism and hospitality is approved as specified work, as long as completed in northern Australia above the tropic of Capricorn. Examples of these positions include work in a range of positions where the primary purpose is to directly provide service to tourists, including operators, guides and tourist transport services. For example work in hotels, restaurants, cafes and bars would be counted as specified work as well as working as a guide or a manager in a gallery or museum. (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2017.)

Table 6. Industries worked in to obtain a second year Working Holiday visa (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2017, 39)



When applying for a second Working Holiday visa, one must provide documents supporting the application. These documents must contain evidence of employment. Acceptable evidence includes certified copies of pay slips, group certificates, payment summaries, tax return, employer references, a completed employment verification form, or a written and signed piecework agreement, setting out the pay rate per piece and how it is measured. When lodging the visa application online, one must pay the fee of the visa, which is currently A\$440. On average 75% of applications are processed within 16 days and 90% within 32 days. (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2017.)

Table 7. Number of second Working Holiday (subclass 417) visa applications granted (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2017, 27)

Year (July – June)	Number of second Working Holiday (subclass 417) visa applications granted
2014 - 2015	41,339
2015 - 2016	36,264
2016 - 2017	34,097

Just like the numbers for the first Working Holiday visa, the grants for a second year Working Holiday visa have been gradually declining in the past 3 years, which can be observed in Table 7. In the year 2014 – 2015 there were over 41,000 second Working Holiday visas granted. Since then the number of applications granted has dropped by over 7000 all in all. This decline is equal to most countries of citizenship apart from Ireland in 2016 – 2017 as can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8. Number of second 417 visas granted by country (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2017, 31)

Country of citizenship	2014 - 2015	2015 - 2016	2016 - 2017
United Kingdom	8,473	8,078	7,811
Taiwan	8,975	7,354	7,330
South Korea	4,928	4,304	4,012
France	3,129	2,997	2,815
Japan	2,148	2,222	2,179
Italy	3,387	2,854	2,166
Ireland	2,572	1,644	1,748

3.5 Applying for a second year on Subclass 462 visa

When applying for a second Work and Holiday visa, one must have completed three months of specified subclass 462 work in northern Australia, above the Tropic Of Capricorn. This work must have been completed while on the first Work and Holiday visa. Specified work when one is on a 462 visa, is work that is undertaken in a designated area in northern Australia in a 'specified' field or industry. Industries that are approved as specified work include tourism and hospitality, plant and animal cultivation, fishing and pearling

and tree farming and felling. So just like with the 417 Working Holiday visa, harvesting and packing of fruit and vegetable crops or pruning and trimming vines and trees would go under plant and animal cultivation, and would also be approved as 'specified work'. In addition, tourism and hospitality is approved as specified work, as long as completed in northern Australia above the tropic of Capricorn. Examples of these positions include work in a range of positions where the primary purpose is to directly provide service to tourists, including operators and guides and tourist transport services. For example work in hotels, restaurants, cafes and bars would be counted as specified work as well as working as a guide or a manager in a gallery or museum. (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2017.)

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Table 9. Number of second Work and Holiday applications granted (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2017, 32)

Year (July – June)	Number of second Work and Holiday (subclass 462) applications granted
2014 - 2015	0
2015 - 2016	0
2016 - 2017	409 (as of Feb. 2017)

The second Work and Holiday visa is a new development. It was only made possible to apply for a second year by the Australian government in February 2017. The number of second Work and Holiday applications granted in 2017 was 409 all in all. These numbers can be observed in Table 9.

Table 10. 7 most popular countries to be granted a second Work and Holiday visa (Department of Immigration and Border Protection 2017, 32)

Country of citizenship	2016 - 2017
China, Peoples Republic of	189
Chile	62
Indonesia	51
United States of America	47
Argentina	16
Spain	12
Thailand	9

3.6 How the 88 days are calculated

The 88 days minimum, needed to complete specified work is equivalent to three calendar months. It is not mandatory to finish the 88 days of work all in one go, or only with one employer. The work can be spread over the whole period of stay in Australia. One can also work longer than the compulsory minimum of three months. The requirements can be met in a variety of ways. For example “working a combination of full-time and part time casual work”, “working five days a week for a continuous period of three calendar months” or by “working the equivalent number of days over a period of more than three calendar months”. Specified work cannot be in any circumstance completed in a period of less than three calendar months in total. Applicants who were prevented from working because of seasonal circumstances or injuries cannot count any of that time towards the three month period. (Work Travel Company 2017, 2-3.)

3.7 Recent changes in taxation and the importance of specified work for the Australian economy

It has been well established that working holiday makers contribute significantly to the Australian economy. In the 2015 – 2016 budget the Australian Government announced a plan to change the tax status of working holiday makers from ‘non-resident’ to ‘resident’ from July 1st 2016. This proposed change meant that people on a WHV would be taxed significantly higher. The announcement made many stakeholders, particularly the ones in the agriculture and tourism sectors, which draw many working Holiday makers, express concerns, that the measure would significantly reduce the numbers of backpackers coming to Australia on a Working Holiday visa, and therefore create labour shortages. In May

2016, the Turnbull Government announced that, if re-elected, the taxation of working holiday makers would be reviewed to 'ensure that the labour supply is adequate and Australia remains competitive globally'. (Parliament of Australia 2017.)

In December 2016 the Government made a deal with the Green Party of Australia. The working holiday maker tax was settled at 15% when earning up to A\$37,000 per year. Down from the original plan of 32,5% for every dollar earned. The deal still eliminated the previous A\$18,200 tax-free threshold starting from January 2017. The deal was established majorly due to the lobbying efforts of farming- and tourism industries. Charlie Armstrong of the Australian National Farmers' Federation said: "The agriculture industry relies on backpackers to fill severe labour shortages, which are often seasonal and temporary - for example, when crops are being harvested or milk production is at its peak. Each year, working holiday makers contribute around A\$3.5 billion to the Australian economy, and around 40,000 find employment on Australian farms. Any further decline will only exacerbate the current trend of 12-percent fewer backpacker arrivals to Australia each year." (DW 2016.)

As the number of working holiday makers has been declining steadily for a number of years, many farmers and growers have been forced to leave fruit on the trees to rot, because of picker shortages. The decline started originally in 2012 due to an increase in visa fees and the reports of tax increases made it worse. A survey done by Melbourne's Monash University found that 60% of backpackers surveyed in Australia between May and June 2016 said, that they would not have come to Australia if the tax of 32,5% had been put in place. They say they would have gone to Canada or New Zealand instead. (DW 2016.) The quantitative study undertaken by Monash University surveyed 335 international working holiday makers in Melbourne, Cairns and Port Douglas. The results showed that 69 % of working holiday makers would spend less on tours while in Australia and 57 % said they would spend less time travelling Australia in general. (Tourism and Transport Forum 2016.)

As this chapter reviewed who the working holiday makers working in Australia are, and how the visa regulations work, the next chapter will be describing what farm work actually is. It will be looking into where to find it, how the seasonality effects availability of work and some of the exploitation that has been reported happening in recent years. It is important to clarify what farm work is and how it works to understand the basis of this thesis.

4 Farm work

Even when it is not technically mandatory to do “farm work” to be eligible for a second year In Australia, the vast majority, according to the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (2017, 39), ends up working in agriculture, forestry and fishing. This is what makes working holiday makers often refer to their mandatory regional work as “farm work”. This chapter looks into how farm work is found, when and where farm work can be done, as well as the exploitation many working holiday makers face while doing farm work.

4.1 Finding work on farms

There are many channels through which backpackers are able to find work on farms. Websites such as Gumtree, Seek, Au.Indeed and Jobsearch are common platforms for farms to advertise their jobs. There are websites solely intended for backpackers looking for work, such as Taw, Backpackerjobboard and Workingholidayjobs. Some websites offer information on seasons and have phone numbers through which, it is possible to enquire open positions. Websites such as Harvest trail.

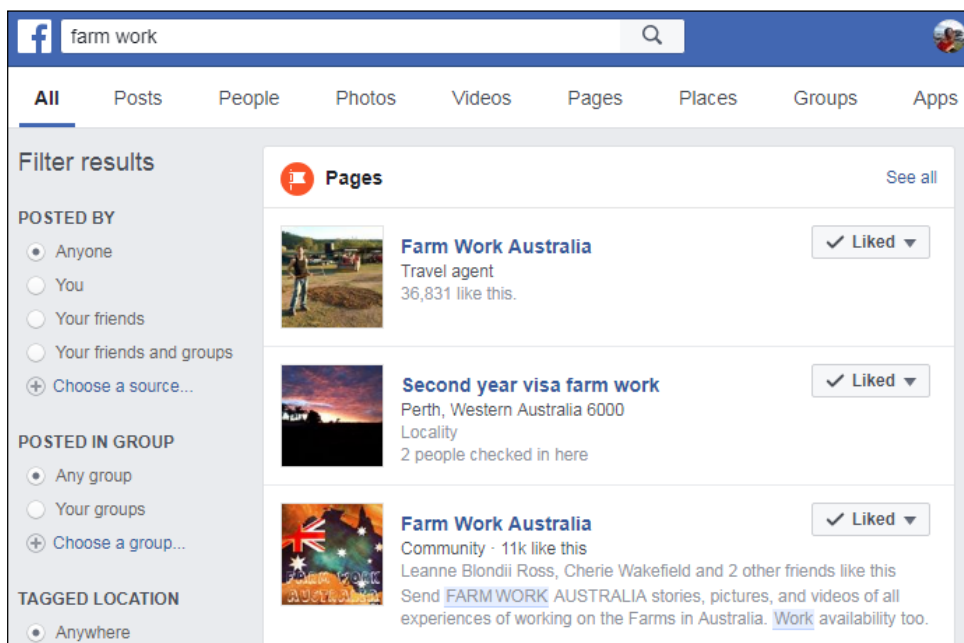


Figure 2. Popular Facebook pages for finding farm work

Facebook is a popular channel for backpackers to find work and for farmers to post available jobs. There are multiple websites with thousands of members. These groups include Fruit Picking Jobs, Working Holiday Jobs and Job Board to name a few. Facebook groups are also frequently used for sharing experiences and warnings of unregulated farm work.

Groups like 88 Days and Counting, with over 5000 members are intended for safer and more regulated farm work. The group contains numerous reviews on farms, job adverts, news articles, people looking for work and general advice, as well as warnings of scams.



Figure 3. Backpackers 88 days and counting

Other ways of finding farm work include working hostels and word of mouth. Working hostels offer weekly rates on accommodation for those working in the area and often assist in finding work. Working hostels are considered an easy way of finding jobs, but getting enough work to finish the 88 days in 88 days is not always 100% guaranteed. (Workstay 2017.)

4.2 Seasonality and location of farm work

Finding work on a farm will highly depend on the ongoing season, especially when looking for harvesting work. As Australia is a large country, different states will produce different crops and harvesting will happen during different periods of the year. This also means that there are areas where there is no work available certain months of the year.

Queensland produces 1/3 of Australia's fruit and vegetables. There are more than 120 different types of fruit and vegetable picked and packed in the state all year round, which

makes it a popular state for working holiday makers to finish their 88 days as there is always work available. In New South Wales, the busiest harvest period is between November and April and it peaks in February. Some of the main produce in New South Wales includes sheep, cattle, pigs, hay, pears, wheat, rice, nuts and cherries. The main season for fruit and vegetable picking in Victoria is from November to April, peaking in February, just like NSW. Main harvest in Victoria includes tomatoes, tobacco, orchard fruits, soft fruits and grapes. (Jobs4travellers 2017.)

The fruit picking season in Tasmania is relatively short. It generally starts in December and ends in May. There is work all around the state. Within the harvest season, pears, stone fruits, grapes, hops berries, apples and much more are grown. Tasmania grows almost a fifth of the apples in Australia. Approximately 55,000 tonnes are grown every year, which creates much work during the harvesting season. In South Australia there is farm work is available all year round. Picking soft fruits such as raspberries, strawberries and citrus is ongoing in the Riverland area. February to April is the season for packing and picking grapes in Barossa Valley. (Jobs4travellers 2017.)

In Western Australia the work varies depending on the season. Fruit picking and harvesting work is ongoing in the Southwestern area, but can be found from May to October in the Northeast of the state as well. From October to June the work is mainly harvesting orchard fruits and grapes. From March to November processing and fishing prawns, scallops and crayfish between Carnarvon and Fremantle is also a possibility. In Northern Territory there are farm jobs available all year. Katherine and Darwin are the most popular areas to find work. Picking melons goes from May to October and from October to November there is work in mango picking and packing. Citrus and bananas on the other hand are grown all year round. (Jobs4travellers 2017.)

4.3 Exploitation on farms

The exploitation of some temporary migrant workers and working holiday makers has been a topic of public concern in Australia in recent years. ABC released a documentary in 2015 titled 'Slaving away: the dirty secrets behind Australia's fresh food', which escalated the public debate. The documentary alleged that working holiday makers are often forced to live in substandard accommodation and are often over-worked and underpaid when working in the agricultural sector in Australia. Some non-English-speaking women interviewed in the documentary even made allegations of sexual harassment and sexual assault and reported being preyed on by employers. (Parliament of Australia 2017.)

When reading articles about farm work and backpackers' experiences, they often had negative experiences while doing farm work. Articles titled such as: "Dark industry of backpacker exploitation", "Wage theft endemic among exploited backpackers" and "Backpackers are getting paid half the minimum wage in Australia". Stories of exploitation on these articles by news.com.au, The Telegraph and Vice include experiences of being underpaid, exploited, threatened and sexually harassed by the farmers.

In the article "Dark industry of backpacker exploitation" by news.com.au, several backpackers are interviewed about their farm work. In one interview, a 25-year old British backpacker, who left the farm after 1 week said the following: "The farmer would only employ women because he was scared of men and he wouldn't let you drink water until you finished picking your row, which sometimes took an hour in 30-degree heat. He was a horrible old pervert. He would sit in his ute and shout at us if we stood up because our backs hurt." Another British backpacker on the same article, who worked in construction in NSW explained the following: "I witnessed a meal thrown at a young girl because it was not to expectations, he said. One of the Argentinian girls, she'd be in tears every day. There were sexual remarks and unwanted advances by the owner and pub patrons. Men watched one of the girls undress through a window. On two separate occasions, a backpacker stepped on a rusty nail. One, they refused to take to hospital. The other they did take, only after it got severely infected but still made her work the next day." (News.com.au 2016.)

A report released by Migrant Worker Justice Initiative in November 2017, found that almost a third of backpackers and international students earned \$12 per hour or less. The survey drew responses from 4,322 temporary migrant workers across 107 nationalities of every region in the world. The survey indicated that Australia has a large underclass of migrant workers, primarily made up of backpackers and international students, who are paid far below the minimum wage in at least 12 main industries. Being underpaid was prevalent in all these industries, but especially severe in vegetable and fruit picking. Severe underpayment was experienced by every major nationality of international students and backpackers in Australia including at least one out of five Americans, Brazilians, British, Chinese and Indians, who earned approximately half the minimum wage. The ones who were being underpaid, at least $\frac{3}{4}$ of them knew they were being paid below minimum wage. One reason to stay in these jobs for them was, that a majority of them believe everyone else on their visa is earning below the minimum wage as well. A large number of them also work in conditions that could be considered criminal forced labour. For example, having their passport confiscated by the employer or being required to pay cash back

to the employer after having been paid their wages. (Migrant Worker Justice Initiative 2017.)

Having reviewed chapter four and looking into the important aspects of farm work as well as the exploitation that has already been reported happening, the next chapter will explain how and why specific data collection methods were used while conducting the research for this thesis. This chapter will include the results of the interviews, which show the reasons behind going to Australia and how enjoyable the farm work was. These results will be discussed even further in chapter six.

5 Methods and data

The aim of this research is to define farm work as an experience and to draw responses from people, who have had both negative and positive experiences. The main purpose is to compare how different the experience of farm work can be amongst working holiday makers. The dictionary definition of experience would include; direct observation of, or participation in events as a basis of knowledge, something personally encountered, undergone or lived through, or the conscious events that make up an individual life (Merriam-Webster 2017.)

Even though it's possible to gain a second year visa by doing something else besides farm work, for example fishing in Western Australia, this research focused solely on working on farms. This is because most second year visas are obtained through working on farms. As can be viewed on from table six.

5.1 Qualitative research method

When looking into which method to use for this research, the qualitative method was an obvious choice when compared to a quantitative method. Quantity refers to how much, how large and the amount of something, whereas quality refers to what kind (Kvale 1996, 67). In this research the aim was to understand what kind of experiences working holiday makers have on farms, and the best way to acquire this knowledge was to conduct interviews and use a qualitative research method.

Qualitative research is empirical research where the data is in the form of words and not numbers. It is an approach, or a way of thinking, which involves a collection of methods and data in a qualitative form. Qualitative research can be described as a way of thinking about the social reality being studied, the way of approaching it and conceptualizing it. The ways, means and designs used to represent that way of thinking, the collection of data, and the qualitative data in the form of words. (Punch 2006, 3-4.)

5.2 Qualitative research interview and the structure of the interviews

In an interview conversation, the researcher listens to what the interviewee has to say about their views and opinions in their own words, learns about what people tell about their lived world and hears what their views are on their work situation as well their fears and hopes. The qualitative research interview tries to understand the world or the topic at

hand, from the subjects' points of view. An interview is exactly that, an 'inter view'. It is an inter change of views between two people having a conversation about a topic or theme. (Kvale 1996, 1-2.) With this research's topic at hand, an interview was vital to understanding experience while on farms.

A qualitative survey interview can be defined as a conversation with a purpose. A key attraction for many respondents seems to be the chance to talk about diverse topics with a sympathetic listener. The reward is some degree of psychic gratification, such as the opportunity to contribute to public or scientific knowledge, the chance to state their opinions or relate their experiences to a sympathetic listener, or even the feeling that they have helped the interviewer. Although the process of a survey interview resembles an ordinary discussion, there are a few key differences. The survey is a transaction between two people who are bound by special norms. For example the interviewer offers no judgement of the respondents' replies and must keep them in confidence. By the same token, the interviewee has an equivalent obligation to answer to each question thoughtfully and truthfully. The ability of the interviewer to secure cooperation and make contact with the respondent is undeniably important in attaining the interview. (Bradburn, Sudman & Wansink 2004, 8-9.)

The exact wording of questions plays a vital part in shaping the answers given by the respondents (Bradburn 2004, 3). This is why shaping the questions in the questionnaire while conducting this research was remarkably important. For example, when looking for an answer to whether backpackers are being paid fairly, it was important to ask "were you paid at least minimum wage?", in these exact words. If the wording had been different, for example "were you paid enough?", the answers could have varied significantly. Due to the fact that "enough" could be defined in a number of ways and therefore, could potentially produce a biased answer. The questions asked were the following.

1. First name, gender, age, nationality, time spent in Australia.
2. Why did you choose to do a Working Holiday in Australia?
3. Would you have ended up doing farm work if it wasn't mandatory to get a second year in Australia? If yes, why?
4. What type of farm work did you do and where?
5. Where did you find your farm work?

6. Were you paid at least minimum wage?
 - a. Were you able to save money during your farm work, how much?
 - b. If you weren't paid the minimum wage, how much were you paid?
7. Were you given proper introduction to the work?
8. How long did it take for you to finish your farm work?
9. Where did you live?
 - a. If in a working hostel, can you explain what it is?
 - b. How much was your rent?
10. Did you enjoy your farm work?
 - a. If yes, why?
 - b. If not, why?
11. Did you develop any health issues or know anyone who did?
12. Can you explain in your own words how you feel about the experience?

For the interviews, both close-ended and open-ended questions were used. It was necessary to use close-ended questions to get answers about demographics, such as nationality, gender, time spent in Australia and to find out financial aspects of farm work. These questions were important to see if there is correlation between the experience of farm work and gender, nationality or how much money was saved for example. To answer questions about the actual experience and the reasons behind farm work being enjoyable or not, open-ended questions were used.

5.3 Conducting the interviews for this thesis

There were all in all six interviews conducted for this research. Both males and females took part in the research and all were between the ages of 23 and 28. The participants were from England, Scotland and Canada. The interviews for this research were all conducted in Melbourne Australia, between 8.2.2018 – 22.2.2018 in various locations. All of the participants were found in hostels and were willing to participate in the research. The participants had to have finished their farm work in the last two years and worked on an actual farm. So for example not done construction, even though one could obtain a second year in Australia through it as well.

Table 11. Demographics of the participants.

Partici- pant	Gender	Age	Nati- onality	Time spent in Austra- lia	The type and location of farm work
P1 Gareth	M	28	UK	13 months	Sweet potato picking and planting in Bundaberg, QLD
P2 Mark	M	25	UK	14 months	Potato harvesting and grading in Albany, WA
P3 Domi- nic	M	26	Canada	9 months	Building cattle yards in Cloncurry, QLD
P4 Leanne	F	26	Scotland	9 months	Apple picking in Sheppar- ton, VIC
P5 Brian	M	23	Scotland	2 years	Banana bell injecting in Mareeba, QLD
P6 Jen	F	23	UK	7 months	Cattle station, Mondure, QLD

5.4 Interview results

The aim of the research was to understand farm work as an experience and the results show, that there are so many aspects to farm work that it would be difficult for the participants to define it as a positive, or a negative one. The experience was never only positive or only negative. It did not seem to have much effect where the farm work was done or what type of work it was. One thing almost all participants had in common was the people on the farm making the experience a positive one. The participants who had been paid at least minimum wage were also more inclined to say, they had a positive experience all in all. Being able to save money did not have much effect on farm work being considered a negative or a positive experience. When asked the question “Would you have done farm work if it wasn’t mandatory to obtain a second year visa?” the following were the responses.

1. "No. Because it's awful." P5.
2. "No. Because I can get paid more doing other work." P1.
3. "No. Because of the way I had heard that they treat people." P2.
4. "Absolutely not." P3.
5. "No. Because being in the middle of nowhere doesn't interest me." P6.
6. "No. Because I didn't really want to spend 3 months of my life doing something I really don't want to do. Which is work in the middle of nowhere. But I just had to." P4.

As the answers show, none of the participants would have done farm work if it was not mandatory to obtain a second year. Main reasons for not wanting to do farm work were for example the fact that it would be "in the middle of nowhere" and you can get paid more doing other work. One reason was also that they had already heard stories of the treatment of other working holiday makers.

Table 12. Salary and expenses on the farms.

Participant	Time spent on the farm	Salary while working on the farm	Rent	Money saved
P1 Gareth	3 months	\$22-\$23/h	\$210/ week for a 6 bed dorm	\$2000
P2 Mark	3 months	\$21/h	\$150/ week for an 8 bed dorm	\$6500
P3 Domi- nic	5 months (88 days were finished in 88 days)	\$180/day. Working 14-15h/day = \$12.41/h. A day off every 10 days	Free in a caravan on the farm	\$16000
P4 Leanne	3 months	\$35/ bucket. Filled one whole bucket in a day. So on average \$4-\$5/h	\$150/week for a 6 bed dorm	\$0
P5 Brian	3 months	\$22,13/h	\$120 for a private room living with a family	\$8000
P6 Jen	2 weeks	\$400 for 2 weeks. Equalled to \$4,08/h with the hours worked.	Free in a room in the house on the farm	\$0

The results show that four out of six participants were able to save money while doing farm work. Saving money did not have much effect on the participants' experience though,

it was still quoted as not very enjoyable. Being paid at least minimum wage did have a slight positive impact, because they did not feel as taken advantage of. The participants who were not able to save money felt taken advantage of and it did make the experience worse overall.

5.4.1 Reasons behind doing a working holiday in Australia

When asked the question, “Why did you choose to do a working holiday in Australia?”, the answers had quite a few similarities to them. Most often, the reasons had to do with weather, distance and it being a dream of some form. The visa being easy to obtain was also a reason for two of the participants.

Table 13. Why the participants chose to do a working holiday in Australia

Participant	“Why did you choose to do a working holiday in Australia?”
P1 Gareth	“Australia was as far as possible from England, so there would be more to see along the way. The visa was also easy to get.”
P2 Mark	“To get away from the daily routine.”
P3 Dominic	“They speak English, have nice beaches and good weather.”
P4 Leanne	“Something I’ve always wanted to do and it’s also warm.”
P5 Brian	“Visa was easier to obtain than the one for Canada.”
P6 Jen	“Because I wanted to travel and stay for a long time, which meant that I would have to work.”

5.4.2 Enjoyability of the farm work

According to the results, farm work was never alone “an enjoyable” or “an unenjoyable” experience. Participants P2, P3, P4 and P6 answered the question “Did you enjoy your farm work?”, in the following way.

1. “I enjoyed the actual work for the first month, but the other two not. Mainly because I had to work extremely long hours in heat, about 10 hours a day. Also the farmer was treating the backpackers on the farm really badly and threatening them. One time when I was listening to music while working, he came over yelling and threatening to strangle me”. P2.

2. "I definitely did not enjoy it. Because there was no proper safety introduction. There were flies everywhere and the work was in 30-40 celsius degree weather. And because I was getting paid way below minimum wage. On average when doing the same job for a legislated company, I should have been earning about \$30-\$40/hour." P3.
3. "It was really hard work and I felt like I was being taken advantage of for being paid so little, so no I did not enjoy the work. The people I was working with made it a lot better though." P4.
4. "I enjoyed the work a lot. But I could not have stayed there with the farmer. He walked around the house naked and he was very sexist, homophobic and racist and I couldn't stay there listening to the things he was saying." P6.

These answers show that there are many challenges working holiday makers face while doing farm work in Australia. Such as the farmer not acting appropriately as can be seen from P2's and P6's answers, being paid way below minimum wage as P4 and P3 were and working in conditions that are not regulated and not necessarily safe, as P3 did.

5.4.3 Explaining the experience

Most participants said they were happy they had done farm work, even though they did not enjoy it. As the answers about experience show, the participants were mainly satisfied with the fact that they had done farm work. Not for the fact that they had particularly liked the work, but because they felt like they had learned something, made friends, built character and learned to deal with difficult situations. All of them mentioned, that they would never do it again. Their answers were the following.

1. "Definitely a good experience. I made a lot of friends, who you end up bonding with because you're all the same boat and kind of stuck there. It starts to feel like a family." P1.
2. "Would never do it again. But it builds character and makes you appreciate 'normal' work." P2.
3. "Extremely challenging. Probably the hardest thing I've ever done, both mentally and physically. All in all shit." P3.
4. "The experience in itself was good because of all the people I was working with. The work though is something I would never do again and I do feel taken advantage off because I was paid on average like 5 dollars an hour." P4.
5. "Glad I've done it but would never do it again." P5.

6. "I'm very happy I had it. Because I learned a lot about how to deal with difficult situations. But I also spent a lot of time and money to get there and the farmer ended up being a complete twat so that annoys me a lot." P6.

These interviews are available upon request. The next chapter reviews the results. It includes discussion about significance and validity. As well as the limitations and reliability of this thesis.

6 Discussion

This chapter evaluates the significance, validity, limitations and the reliability of this thesis. The first topic of discussion will be what kind of significance this type of this thesis holds. As the results showed the answers did not turn out to be exactly as expected, which will be discussed in validity and from there the discussion will continue to the potential limitations and reliability of this thesis.

6.1 Significance

This research is significant because it addresses the problems many working holiday makers experience while working on rural farms, such as being paid way below minimum wage and working in harsh conditions with no introduction to potentially dangerous work. It is a very current topic in Australia and measures are being taken to ensure, labour is not being taken advantage of, but as the results have shown, these measures are not being enforced enough, as there were participants who were still paid way below minimum wage. The results also show that many of the backpackers are treated fairly and get paid above minimum wage, and therefore farm work is not all exploitation, which is something that comes to mind when hearing the stories.

This type of research would be significant for a large number of people. It would be significant for the authorities of Australia, to see what can happen on farms, so more drastic measures could be taken to ensure the safety and the rights of working holiday makers. It would be significant for future working holiday makers, so they would know what to expect and know when they are being taken advantage of. It could be significant for businesses that help young people get to Australia on a Working Holiday visa. By reading research such as this one, they could let these people know what they might come across, already before heading to Australia and advise them on what they should expect if they end up applying for a second year visa.

6.2 Validity

The main question of this thesis was, what kind of an experience farm work is. Whether it is a positive or a negative one. As the results indicated this question did get a valid answer, it is neither. It turned out that an experience of three months cannot be described just as negative or positive, and if it did, it might have to be something extremely corrupt. These experiences tend to have both negative and positive aspects to them. The main

negative aspect was definitely the work and the feeling of being mistreated or taken advantage of. The most common positive aspect was sharing this experience with others who were “on the same boat” and felt like doing this kind of tough work had made them learn something.

6.3 Limitations and reliability

The limitations of a qualitative research such as this one is, that you have to take the person’s word for it and there really is no way of knowing if they are exaggerating or plainly making stories up. The results of these interviews are likely based on true events, but when explaining one’s experience, it is always a possibility that there is some exaggeration involved. As there are many similar stories to the one’s of the participants, there is no reason to doubt that they would not have been honest about the events, their salaries and the feeling of being mistreated. If they were asked to participate in a similar interview again, there is no reason to believe that their answers would change drastically as none of their answers seem too unbelievable, in light of what so many people have said in other similar interviews. Also during the interview process, none of the participants seemed like they were exaggerating, they were just describing their experiences.

When considering the reliability of this research, it could have been helpful to determine an overall average number of people, who had a negative or a positive experience while doing farm work. This number could have been determined for example, by posting a questionnaire on a backpacker group on Facebook, where there are thousands of members, of whom several have done farm work. By getting an average number with multiple answers would have helped understand farm work as an experience on a larger scale. Whether more people would define it as a negative or a positive experience on average, could have produced a more reliable answer. Then again, as the results of the interviews concluded, the experience is never just negative, or just positive. A Facebook survey might have worked if they were asked to just say, if they were paid minimum wage or not. The reliability of whether backpackers are being paid fairly on average, would have potentially been higher, than with just six interviews. Also it would have been helpful to also consult farmers about this topic as they are on the other side of the spectrum. Seeing the views of the opposite side could help see a bigger picture of farm work.

After reviewing the significance, validity, limitations and the reliability, the next chapter will be the conclusion. The next chapter will include suggestions on how to make farm work a

more enjoyable experience, such as government involvement. It will also include ideas for potential future research and the whole timeline of this thesis.

7 Conclusion

The objective of this thesis was to find out how the experience of farm work is and whether it is more of a negative or a positive experience. The results show that it is not at all that simply defined. There are some negative and positive aspects to each individuals farm work. The most common positive aspect is forming "a family" with fellow working holiday makers. The most common negative aspect was working long hours in heat and the farmer not acting appropriately as has already been determined in the previous chapter. In some cases though the farmer was a part of the positive experience because the backpackers felt "looked after".

7.1 Suggestions on how to make farm work a more enjoyable experience

A way to make farm work more legit and more official would be to make it applicable through a government maintained web site, where the farmers would contact the government and where it would be mandatory for them to file their tax reports, how many workers they have, what type of work it is and how they ensure the security of the workers while doing work. Through these websites working holiday makers could be ensured that they are applying for legalised work.

As the results have shown, most participants did not enjoy their farm work. What they enjoyed was the people, which has little to do with the actual work. Ways to make the actual farm work enjoyable, would be for working holiday makers to not agree to work in conditions, which are not regulated or fair. And for them to report any employers who aren't paying them legally. This way they would not be able to keep doing it to future working holiday makers. This suggestion is hard to put into effect, as backpackers who do their farm work seem to be desperate for the second year, which can be determined by the fact that not one participant would have worked on a farm if it was not mandatory. So for backpackers to not have to work in unfair conditions, in many cases, the government could, for example enforce more random checks on farms and see if the workers are being paid at least minimum wage and check if there are any issues. This as well might be a bit difficult, largely because most farms are located in very rural areas and checking up on farms might be difficult and expensive for the officials to do.

The results also showed that the experience in itself was made a lot better when it was shared with other working holiday makers. That in mind, a suggestion for future working

holiday makers, who are planning to do farm work, would be to find a farm where the experience can be shared with others. This way at least some part of it, could be considered a positive experience, if the work is not. This of course if everything continues as it is and the government does not interfere and improve matters for working holiday makers.

7.2 Potential future research

As this research only focused on the experiences of working holiday makers, the next topic of research could be the experiences of the farmers. It would be helpful to see their side of the story, if for example working holiday makers cause trouble or have any other negative aspects to them. It would be interesting to see, if the farmers view working holiday makers in general as good or bad workers. This would help see the other side of the spectrum, but if wanting to research something, that would help future backpackers, would be to find out which farms are actually reliable, and which to avoid. This could be done the same way as this thesis, by interviewing people on their experiences and naming the farms. This could be made into a guide book for example for future working holiday makers to see, where they can work and get paid legally and be treated fairly and this way have a positive experience.

7.3 Timeline and the process of this thesis

The planning of this thesis started in November 2017. Having already spent eight months in Australia at this point, I had come across multiple stories about farm work and the experiences other people on working holiday visas had had. Many of them felt unfair and almost unbelievable. This inspired me to look into the visa regulations and to look for more experiences and see if farm work is actually "that bad". Which it in a few cases was. Being threatened to be strangled by your boss, being paid on average five dollars an hour or working 14 hour days in extreme heat doesn't seem like an experience many would find enjoyable. I see that, what definitely could have improved this thesis would have been to add a bit of quantitative data into it by asking a larger group of people on Facebook, how they felt about farm work.

The timeline could have been managed a little bit tighter, but because of various reasons, it was not possible to finish this thesis as soon as originally planned. The writing of the theoretical part was done between December and January. The interviews were conducted in February and this whole thesis was concluded by the end of April. As I was

mainly working on this thesis in Australia from a distance, I learned the importance of prioritising when doing independent work. The interest in this topic kept on increasing, the more I did research and kept writing. It is a very relevant topic, and in my opinion there should be more research done in the near future to solve the issues that arose in this thesis.

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Attachments

Attachment 1. Research questionnaire

1. First name, gender, age, nationality, time spent in Australia
2. Why did you choose to do a Working Holiday in Australia?
3. Would you have ended up doing farm work if it wasn't mandatory to get a second year in Australia? If yes, why?
4. What type of farm work did you do and where?
5. Where did you find your farm work?
6. Were you paid at least minimum wage?
a. Were you able to save money during your farm work, how much?
b. If you weren't paid the minimum wage, how much were you paid?
7. Were you given proper introduction to the work?
8. How long did it take for you to finish your farm work?
9. Where did you live?
a. If in a working hostel, can you explain what it is?
b. How much was your rent?
10. Did you enjoy your farm work?
a. If yes, why?
b. If not, why?
11. Did you develop any health issues or know anyone who did?
12. Can you explain in your own words how you feel about the experience?