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STREAMLINING AND STRENGTHENING PACIFIC LABOUR FOR A NEW ERA

Today we announce the next stage of reforms to the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme, providing a single, streamlined program that will benefit employers, workers, and our Pacific family.

The two existing PALM initiatives - the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) and Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS) - will be consolidated and operated under a single, improved PALM scheme. It will commence in April 2022 and be managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Today's announcement builds on the Morrison Government's announcement on 14 September 2021, which introduced the new PALM scheme framework and provided additional program flexibilities in response to industry and stakeholder needs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Pacific and Timorese workers have been essential to many regional businesses, with almost 19,000 workers currently filling critical workforce gaps in Australia.

The PALM scheme will remain uncapped, and demand driven. It will be the primary means of filling unskilled to semi-skilled workforce shortages in rural and regional Australia, with more than 55,000 Pacific and Timorese workers approved and ready to take up jobs in agriculture, meat processing, the care sectors, hospitality and tourism, and other sectors.

The government will focus closely on worker welfare and protections as the PALM scheme grows, to guarantee an active compliance and assurance program.

The improved PALM scheme will feature new program and visa settings, while providing strong worker protections and delivering streamlined processes and administrative efficiencies, specifically:

- Extending work periods from three years up to four years will be permitted, to provide stability for regional businesses, and give workers time to develop skills, complete qualifications and earn increased income to send home to their families
 - The Skills Development Program for workers, announced in September 2021, will be expanded.
- Seasonal workers will be able to apply onshore for a longer-term visa, where they have been identified by their employer as suitable for ongoing, year-round or higher skilled work.
- Seasonal workers will be able to move between employers more easily, to better meet workforce needs and maximise their earnings. These arrangements will be subject to consent by workers and overseen by the Government, to ensure worker wellbeing is maintained.
- A single scheme will deliver administrative efficiencies for employers, who will benefit from a single Deed of Agreement, program guidelines and IT platform, and engagement with one department, thereby reducing duplication.
- All employers and workers will benefit from the services, including welfare and cultural expertise, provided by the Pacific Labour Facility (PLF).
- Resources from the two existing programs will be pooled to deliver enhanced worker protections and support:
 - The PALM scheme will continue to feature robust vetting of employers, and an active monitoring, compliance and assurance program
 - education for employers and workers will be a continued feature, including on Australia's laws and workplace rights and conditions, and on cross-cultural understanding;
 - a 24/7 helpline for workers to protect welfare, operated by the PLF.
- The Fair Work Ombudsman will continue to be funded to provide education and proactive checks to ensure workers are paid in accordance with Australian laws and Fair work conditions.

The single PALM scheme delivers on industry calls for a more streamlined and efficient approach to employing Pacific workers. It will help employers in rural and regional Australia more easily engage the right workers where and when they need them, while protecting the welfare of workers and delivering strong economic benefits for Pacific workers, their families and countries.

Further information about these reforms and other PALM scheme details can be found in the [attached](#) fact sheet or by visiting palmscheme.gov.au.

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