



AQUACULTURE & SEAFOOD PROCESSING

The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme is the overarching identity for the Australian Government's Pacific labour mobility programs.

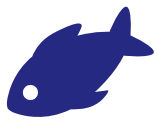
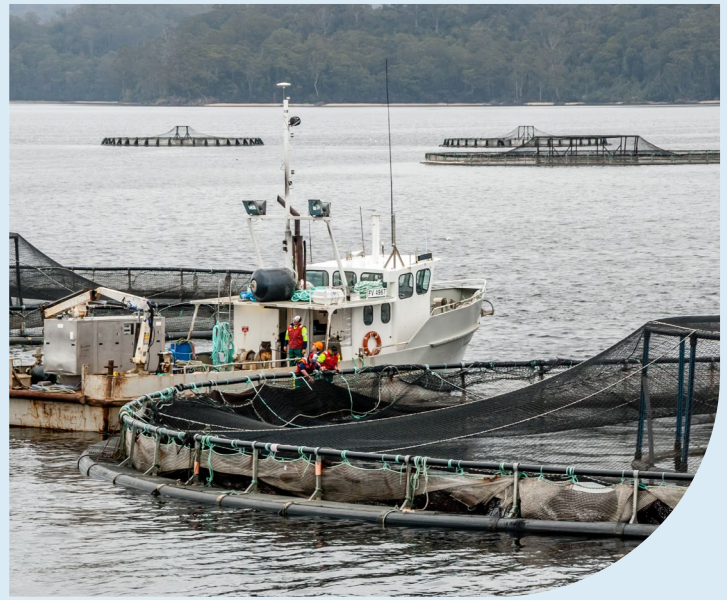
Through the PALM scheme, job seekers from 9 Pacific island countries and Timor-Leste can work in the Australian aquaculture and seafood processing sector for a period of between one and 4 years.

Aquaculture in Australia

Aquaculture is the farming of aquatic animals or the cultivation of aquatic plants for food. In Australia, aquaculture involves the commercial breeding of fish onshore in ponds, dams or tanks as well as in offshore cages at sea.

The most common aquaculture species produced in Australia are salmon, trout, tuna, southern blue fin tuna, oysters, prawns and pearls. Other species grown in Australia include abalone, freshwater fish (such as barramundi, Murray cod, silver perch), brackish water or marine fish (such as barramundi, snapper, yellowtail kingfish, mulloway, grouper), mussels, ornamental fish, marine sponge, mud crab and sea cucumber.

Roles in the seafood industry through the PALM scheme are likely to be at land-based or offshore farms, rather than wild-catch fishing at sea. Workers may be placed in hatcheries, marine farms or in seafood processing centres. Note: the seafood processing industry in Australia employs a high proportion of women at 43%.



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Working in aquaculture can be challenging. Workers need to be physically fit and prepared to work outdoors in weather that may be very hot or cold. Workers may also be indoors in refrigerated processing facilities where the temperature is around 3°C. The work may be repetitive and require standing for long periods of time.

Roles in aquaculture & seafood processing

There are a range of low-skilled and semi-skilled roles available including:

Deckhand

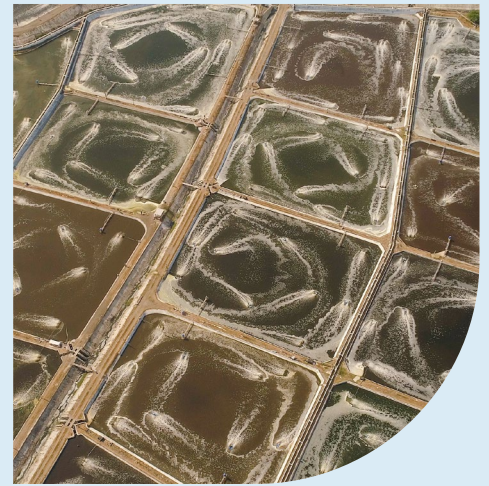
Farm hand (includes cleaning and basic maintenance)

Seafood processor

Worker responsibilities

Worker responsibilities may include some or all of the below, depending on the role:

- feeding, grading and monitoring fish growth
- assisting with farm layout and construction
- inspection and maintenance of equipment and fish housing
- operating pumps and other equipment
- removing dead and dying fish
- operating lifting equipment such as forklifts and small cranes
- restocking pens, pools, tanks, ponds, rivers and dams with juvenile fish
- recording growth, production, water quality testing and data collection
- inspecting, cleaning and maintenance duties
- harvesting fish, shellfish and sorting and packing for transportation
- scaling, cleaning, filleting, shelling, grading and packaging seafood and loading and dispatching products.



Above: aerial view of ponds growing shrimp and fish.
Left: oyster farm in NSW.

Personal skills and attributes

Aquaculture and seafood processing workers must all have:

- the ability to listen and respond to directions well, communicate with team members and supervisors, interpret diagrams, pictures and written instructions
- an understanding and commitment to workplace health and safety, and the ability to understand and follow safety instructions in all situations
- the ability to understand and follow COVID-safe practices and good hygiene
- a strong work ethic
- the ability to be work as part of a team
- a good level of physical fitness
- the ability to work in a range of environments, which may be hot, humid, cold and/or wet
- the ability to be reliable, punctual and ready to work
- an understanding that Australia has laws in place regarding animal welfare, biosecurity and food safety, and these regulations must be complied with at all times.

Qualifications and skills

Aquaculture workers

- have the ability to swim and be comfortable getting into water or fish cages
- are prepared to work in water up to chest height wearing waders
- Certificate I in Maritime Operations (General Purpose Hand) (MAR10318) is required in some roles involving boat work
- Certificate 11 or 111 in Aquaculture (desirable but not compulsory)
- are able to work in cold environments of 3-5°C
- driving licence, forklift operator's certificate, chemical use accreditation and first aid certificates are desirable but not compulsory.

Seafood processing workers

- are prepared to work in a cold processing facility and have the stamina and self-discipline to undertake repetitive work
- Certificate I or II in Seafood Processing (desirable but not compulsory)
- have completed or are prepared to complete seafood processing workers' food safety training
- forklift operator's certificate and first aid certificates are desirable but not compulsory.

CONDITIONS FOR WORKERS

Wages

All PALM scheme workers have the same rights and protections as Australian workers. There are in-built systems to protect the welfare and wellbeing of PALM scheme workers.

Workers are employed under Australian legislation, this may be under a modern award or an enterprise agreement. Both of these outline minimum payments that must be made to all workers. This will be detailed in a worker's offer of employment.

Costs to work in Australia – deductions

The employer will pay most upfront costs for a worker, such as airfares, visa, pre-employment costs (e.g., vaccinations) and cash advances. These costs will need to be repaid to the employer through deductions from a worker's pay over a minimum of 12 weeks.

After these initial costs have been repaid, there will be some ongoing expenses that the employer will deduct from every pay. These may differ across Australia, between employers and

perhaps even among members of the same team, depending on the situation. Examples of on-going deductions are accommodation, health insurance, transport and household bills.

Working hours

Work in aquaculture facilities is usually daytime only, however it may involve very early morning starts and may include working on weekends.

Processing plants often run 24 hours, 7 days a week and a work shift may be in the morning, afternoon, evening or overnight.

Workers will work a minimum 30 hours across each pay period, and overtime and extra days may be required during peak times.

Leave & entitlements

Paid annual leave

Full-time workers: 4 weeks per year (20 working days).

Part-time workers: 4 weeks per year (adjusted to part-time hours per week). Casual workers: none.

Paid sick leave

Full-time and part-time workers: 10 days per year.

Casual workers: none.

Accommodation

- The employer will find suitable accommodation for workers.
- This may include shared arrangements in an onsite house, on board a boat, or in offside cabins.
- Workers will pay rent for their accommodation as a pay deduction each pay period.
- Alternatively, workers are welcome to find their own rental accommodation.

Locations

Workers may be located in a remote or regional part of Australia. This may be a small town far from a major city, with low population levels and only basic community services.

Depending on the location the weather may be very hot or very cold.



▲ Working in seafood processing may involve standing for long periods of time in a refrigerated storeroom.

Where can I find more information?

To find out more about the PALM scheme, please visit the website: www.palmscheme.gov.au

You can find contact details for each country's labour sending unit at: www.palmscheme.gov.au/how-apply