



WORKING IN DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

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 disability sector for a minimum period of one year and up to 4 years.

Disability services in Australia

Disability care services in Australia provide support to people living with physical or mental disability. Clients can be of any age, and they may be receiving care in their own home or in a health care facility.

The level of care varies widely depending on the person's individual needs, and may include personal care such as showering, toileting, dressing and eating, as well as help with rehabilitation exercises, basic treatments and delivery of medications.

The key purpose of disability support workers is to provide culturally appropriate care that enhances and promotes the client's quality of life.

It is recommended that workers have previous experience in caring for a person with a disability or have a Certificate III or IV in a relevant course.



DISABILITY SERVICES

Disability services in Australia aim to create a home and community environment to nurture the mental and physical wellbeing of residents. They provide a comfortable, happy and secure environment so residents can continue to live in their own communities, without having to move to a new town or the city.

Roles in disability services

There are several low-skilled and semi-skilled roles available including:

Disability support worker or support worker

Allied health assistant

Service roles including gardeners, cooks, kitchen hands, day-trip supervisors, maintenance workers, groundskeepers and cleaners

Worker responsibilities

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

- assist clients with showering, toileting, dressing and other personal care and hygiene needs
- help clients with rehabilitation exercises and treatments
- provide companionship and conversation
- food and meal preparation, helping clients to eat
- domestic and housekeeping duties, such as cleaning, vacuuming, grocery shopping
- comply with workplace health, safety and hygiene standards
- ensure the clients' spaces are clean and free of hazards
- use computers to document and report on clients' care needs
- help clients get to appointments and stay socially engaged, for example taking them to shops or outings
- help clients with techniques to maintain their independence
- liaise with residents' family and other health professionals in their healthcare team
- provide culturally appropriate care.



Personal skills and attributes

Working in disability services requires a commitment to clients' mental and emotional wellbeing. It is essential to treat clients and their families with compassion, respect and dignity.

Workers should display the following skills and attributes:

- empathy and understanding of people who have a disability, medical condition, or display challenging behaviours
- respect for the client's environment and their other carers, including family and significant others
- a positive attitude to work, a willingness to learn and commit to the employer's values
- strong communication skills, including a good standard of English language skills.



Qualifications

Certificate III in Individual Support (Disability)

Certificate IV in Individual Support (Disability)

Certificate III in Allied Health Assistance

Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance

Short courses/certifications

NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission's Worker Orientation

Australian Department of Health's COVID-19 infection control

Disability workers should have the ability to pass the NDIS worker screening check (similar to a police check).

Qualifications in disability or community care services, aged care, allied health assistance or equivalent (minimum Certificate III) or willingness to obtain these.

Current first aid certificate and cardiopulmonary resuscitation certificate or willingness to obtain these.

Manual handling

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 ongoing deductions are accommodation, health insurance, transport and household bills.

Working hours

Residential care facilities operate 24 hours, 7 days a week, so worker shifts may include day or night shifts as well as sleep-over shifts.

Hours may differ for workers in a residential care facility and those providing in-home care.

Workers will work a minimum of 30 hours per week, and shifts will generally be up to 8 hours per day.

For some roles such as kitchen work, 'split' shifts may be required, for example 4 hours in the morning and 4 hours in the afternoon or evening.

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. This may include share housing, on-site accommodation or other housing near the facility.

Workers will pay rent for their accommodation as a pay deduction each pay period. Alternatively, workers can find their own rental accommodation.

Worker locations

Through the PALM scheme workers may be placed 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. Some examples of towns PALM scheme workers are living in are shown below.



▲ Bundanoon, located in the Southern Highlands of NSW, has a population of approximately 3000 people. In winter the weather can drop to an overnight low of 2°C, while summer can reach 32°C.



▲ Alice Springs in central Australia has a population of approximately 27,000 people. It is located 1200km from the nearest sea and 1500km from the nearest city. In the wet season the temperature can reach 40°C, while in the dry season it can drop to zero at night.

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