



WORKING IN MEAT 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 meat processing sector for a minimum period of one year and up to 4 years.

Meat processing in Australia

Australia has large-scale meat processing facilities that specialise in producing pork, beef, poultry, kangaroo, crocodile and lamb products for human and animal consumption.

A meat processing facility is often referred to as a **slaughterhouse** or an **abattoir**.

An abattoir may have holding yards with live animals, as well as a kill floor (slaughter room), refrigerated processing rooms, plus packaging and dispatch areas.

Abattoir workers are part of a team responsible for managing the livestock slaughtering process, boning, cutting, packaging and preparing the meat for sale.

Some workers may be placed in very large abattoirs with more than 800 staff who work to process around 1000 animals every day. Working in meat processing means you will be in a fast-paced team environment where the work can be physically demanding and repetitive.



▲ Large-scale abattoirs process around 1000 animals per day. The pace of work is fast and workers need to have good hand-eye coordination to keep up with the automated process line. The work can be physically demanding, with heavy lifting, repetitive work and require standing for long periods of time.



MEAT PROCESSING

An abattoir is a fast-paced working environment. Each worker is part of a team responsible for one part of a larger process. In some instances the meat products are moving on an automated process line that only stops during break times. This means each worker needs to be able to keep up.

Roles in meat processing include a range of low-skilled and semi-skilled roles such as:

Packers

Cleaners and rubbish removalist

Slaughterers, boners, butchers and machine operators



WORKER RESPONSIBILITIES

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

- packers: packing meat products into bags and/or boxes.
- garbage removalist: collect residual meat and bone products.
- cleaners: mop and sweep floors and general cleaning duties.
- slaughtering animals
- boning and butchering: use knives to cut meat and other products off the carcass.
- machine operators: e.g. bandsaw, hock cutters, strapper, denuder, air saw, wizard knives



▲ Workers need to follow the safety instructions to avoid injury and keep safe.



▲ Meat processing includes roles for women in meat processing and packing.



▲ Some roles require the strength to push a 40kg carcass and work in a cold room at around 2°C degrees.



PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

- workers should be fit and healthy – as the work can be physically demanding and require heavy lifting (up to 25kg), bending and standing for long periods of time
- able to cope with the physical and mental demands of repetitive work
- be able to work in a fast-paced environment
- previous experience in a labouring environment is preferred but not essential
- able to work in cold environments 3-5°C
- must have good hygiene as workers are handling food products
- have full vision and good hand-eye coordination
- be able to pass a drug test.



PERSONAL SKILLS AND ATTRIBUTES

- have a good work ethic, show commitment, be motivated and show initiative
- willingness to learn new skills and participate in training provided by employer
- strong attention to detail and a commitment to quality
- ability to work independently and be a team player
- have a good level of English
- ability to work safely and follow safety instructions
- Q fever vaccination is required
- compulsory wearing of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE is provided)
- be comfortable working in cold conditions and with blood.

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

Workers will work a minimum of 30 hours per week with an average of 38 hours per week. Most work will be Monday to Friday, however some weekend work may be required on occasion.

Shifts will be a minimum of 8 hours per day and some shifts may be up to 10 hours.

Hours of work will generally be between 5.00am and 11.00pm with some night shifts.

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 share housing or suitable 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.

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. Meat processing facilities are generally located near larger rural centres.

Depending on the location the weather may be very hot or very cold. Some examples of towns with PALM scheme workers are shown below.



▲ Cowra is a small town in central western New South Wales, with a population of roughly 10,000 people. In winter the temperature averages 3 - 14°C and in summer 15-33°C.



▲ Warrnambool is a coastal town in western Victoria with a population of about 31,000 people. The main industries are tourism, agriculture, dairy farming, and meat processing. The beaches are popular with tourists for surfing in summer and whale watching in winter.

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