

# Budget 2022-23: Building a stronger Pacific family - reforming the PALM scheme

The Australian Government is committed to improving and expanding the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme and has an ambitious reform agenda. This budget delivers on this commitment.

We have been closely consulting with our Pacific and Timor-Leste family and Australian employers to develop new policies that maximise benefits for workers, their communities and Australian industry.

The PALM scheme currently provides job opportunities to more than 29,000 Pacific and Timor-Leste workers (as at September 2022), boosting vital remittance flows and creating people-to-people connections within the region. It is Australia's key temporary migration program, helping meet labour shortages nationwide, especially in regional Australia. The Government will seek to increase the number of PALM scheme workers in Australia to around 35,000 by June 2023.

## 1. Family accompaniment

Employers will be able to sponsor PALM scheme workers on **long-term placements of between one and 4 years** to bring their immediate family to Australia.

Partners (wife, husband, de facto) will be able to live, work and study in Australia, and children of PALM scheme workers will have access to Australian schools.

Eligible PALM scheme families will have access to the Family Tax Benefit and the Child Care Subsidy to provide financial assistance while they are raising their children in Australia, reduce barriers to workforce participation by family members and ensure they have a positive experience in Australia. All family members of PALM scheme workers will need to hold adequate health insurance while in Australia.

The Government is currently working on the eligibility criteria and arrangements that need to be in place to ensure families of PALM scheme workers are supported to have a positive experience in Australia. To ensure we get this right, family accompaniment is expected to commence with a small number of families in 2023.


We are listening to the views of Pacific and Timor-Leste governments, workers, employers and community organisations to help shape implementation of this policy.

## 2. Increasing investment in aged care

The Australian Government is committed to increasing investment in training for aged care workers as well as supporting Australian aged care employers to recruit more workers through the PALM scheme.

The scheme will expand existing pilots to support a further 500 workers in 2023 to complete their Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing). A range of training delivery options will be considered to help workers to take up this opportunity and achieve best possible outcomes for the Pacific and Timor-Leste and Australian employers.

Expressions of interest will be sought from existing PALM scheme employers in the aged care sector to participate in the expanded pilot. PALM scheme employers will be selected on their ability to meet specified, transparent criteria such as consideration of the relative need for aged care



workers within a geographic area, and consideration of the salary and benefits package that will be offered to PALM scheme workers.

### 3. Upfront travel costs

As part of the Australian Government's commitment to make the PALM scheme more attractive for businesses, the Government will **reimburse costs that cannot be recouped** from seasonal workers through no fault of the employer (e.g., due to unexpected flight changes, cancellations or where workers disengage).

Employers will still be required to make a \$300 contribution to workers' flights.

We will work with stakeholders on processes for employers to claim reimbursement. This policy is expected to commence in mid-2023.

### 4. Relocating the Australian Agriculture Visa under the PALM scheme

To deliver on the Australian Government's election announcement to relocate the former Australian Agriculture Visa (AAV) program under the PALM scheme, the Government will adjust the scheme's settings to reflect key features of the AAV.

These features will be discussed and negotiated with stakeholders in the coming weeks and months and may include:

- improved arrangements for worker portability (moving workers with their consent between PALM scheme employers) to ensure that employers have the flexibility to meet their business needs and provide workers with sufficient working hours
- adjusting the scheme's settings to allow more businesses in the agricultural supply chain to recruit PALM scheme workers where there are proven workforce shortages
- additional resources to reach 35,000 PALM scheme workers in Australia by June 2023, and a boost in resourcing to intensify action against unscrupulous operators who encourage PALM scheme workers to disengage in breach of their visa conditions
- exploring options to reduce red-tape for employers, and better support small growers' participation in the scheme without weakening worker protections.

The Government will continue to work closely with industry, unions and community representatives to co-design changes to PALM scheme settings to reflect the needs of the agriculture sector and make it more attractive for businesses.

More information will be provided on these reforms at [www.palmscheme.gov.au](http://www.palmscheme.gov.au) shortly.