

Budget 2022-23: Frequently asked questions on the PALM scheme reforms

General

What reforms are being announced at Budget 2022-23 for the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme?

On 25 October, the new Australian Government will deliver its first Federal Budget.

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

The Government will:

1. allow long-term workers to bring their immediate family to Australia, where employer-sponsored, with access to additional social supports to ensure they have a positive experience
2. expand existing aged care pilots to support a further 500 PALM scheme workers to complete their Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing)
3. reimburse employers for upfront travel costs that cannot be recouped from seasonal workers, less a \$300 employer contribution to workers' flights, through no fault of the employer (e.g. where workers disengage)
4. relocate the former Australian Agriculture Visa (AAV) program under the PALM scheme by adjusting the scheme's settings to reflect key features of the AAV.

Family accompaniment

What is family accompaniment?

The Australian Government has committed to allowing PALM scheme workers on long-term placements of between one and 4 years to bring their families to Australia, subject to employer sponsorship.

This policy aims to address the social impacts of long periods of family separation and build deeper connections with our Pacific and Timor-Leste family.

Who can apply?

Employers will be able to sponsor PALM scheme workers on long-term placements of between one and 4 years to bring their family to Australia. Partners (wife, husband, de facto) will be able to live, work and study in Australia. Children will be able to go to school.

Eligibility criteria are still being developed.

Seasonal/short-term workers are unable to bring their families to Australia.

When can workers bring their families to Australia?

Please don't book flights for family members yet.

Family accompaniment is expected to commence with a small number of families in 2023. The Australian Government is currently working on the eligibility criteria and arrangements that need to be in place to make sure that PALM scheme families have a positive experience in Australia.

What visa conditions will apply to families?

The Australian Government is still working out visa arrangements for partners and dependents before we can start welcoming families to Australia.

Once these details are settled, more information will be provided. In the meantime, we are listening to the views of Pacific and Timor-Leste governments, workers, employers and community organisations to help shape policy development to ensure successful implementation.

What support will be provided to secondary visa holders?

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 an Australian education.

The Australian Government will extend access to the Family Tax Benefit and the Child Care Subsidy to eligible PALM scheme families to provide financial assistance while they are raising their children in Australia. This will 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.

Can workers' children go to school in Australia?

Yes. Children of PALM scheme workers will have access to Australian schools.

Do workers' family members need health insurance?

Yes. All family members of a PALM scheme worker will need to hold adequate health insurance while in Australia.

The Australian Government is currently working on the eligibility criteria and arrangements that need to be in place to make sure workers and their families have a positive experience in Australia.

What if a worker or their spouse is pregnant?

Health insurance packages generally have a 12-month waiting period for pregnancy-related services, meaning that families requiring pregnancy related services will need to self-fund these in their first 12 months.

PALM scheme workers should consider that pregnancy during their stay will add pressure to workers' cost of living while in Australia.

Workers should note that children born to temporary visa holders in Australia will not automatically be granted Australian citizenship. Please refer to the Department of Home Affairs website for further information relating to visa conditions.

Will PALM scheme employers hire a worker's spouse?

Opportunities for partners and dependents to work in Australia will depend on job vacancy rates where the worker is based, English language and skills requirements (where relevant). In some cases, PALM scheme employers may have work to offer a spouse or dependent, while in other locations, there may be few work opportunities.

Will spouses need to pass an English exam?

Eligibility criteria are still being developed. More information will be provided in the coming months.

What should workers know about bringing their families to Australia?

There will be costs associated with moving to Australia including passports, visas, travel expenses, health checks, family health insurance, setting up a home and sourcing school supplies (e.g. stationery, laptops and uniforms) for children attending school.

It is expensive to live in many parts of Australia, so families should carefully consider the costs of supporting a family in Australia.

It can be difficult for families to find suitable and affordable accommodation in many parts of Australia right now. This may limit opportunities for families seeking to join PALM scheme workers.

For further information, please view the [family accompaniment factsheet](#).

What is the Pacific Engagement Visa?

The new Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV) will also start in July 2023 and allow holders of the visa to come to Australia with their family. The PEV is separate from the PALM scheme visa. It is intended to create permanent migration pathways and to grow the Pacific diaspora in Australia. It is not necessary to be a PALM scheme worker to apply for the PEV.

Up to 3,000 visas will be allocated annually by a ballot process across Pacific countries and Timor-Leste. Those selected from the ballot will be invited to apply for permanent residency once they have secured a written employment agreement in Australia and meet other migration requirements.

Details on the process are still being finalised, but PALM scheme participants in Australia on valid temporary visas will also be eligible to apply for the PEV ballot when applications open.

The PEV will take into consideration previous migration history of applicants. If you have breached Australian visa conditions in the past, your application may be rejected. The visa is currently in the early stages of design and more information will be provided when it becomes available.

Increasing investment in aged care

What pathways are there to jobs in the aged care sector?

The Australian Government is piloting aged care training pathways with the objective of increasing the number of qualified aged care workers under the PALM Scheme. Through the aged care pilots, PALM scheme workers will earn a Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing) and work for up to 4 years in Australia.

What is the Australian Government doing to increase aged care workers under the PALM scheme?

The Australian Government is 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 by supporting 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 ensure successful outcomes for the Pacific and Timor-Leste and Australian employers.

Which employers can participate in the expanded aged care pilots?

Expressions of interest will be sought from existing PALM scheme employers in the aged care sector to participate in the expanded pilot.

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 the PALM scheme workers.

More information will be provided in the coming months on eligibility criteria and a commencement date.

When will the number of aged care workers under the PALM scheme increase?

We will soon start seeking expressions of interest from existing Approved Employers in the aged care sector to participate in the expanded pilot. This will support a further 500 workers in 2023 to complete their Certificate III in Individual Support (Ageing).

What training will the Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) offer?

Funding more APTC places is one of many options available to ensure more PALM scheme workers have the skills they need to take up opportunities in Australia's aged care sector. A range of training delivery options will be considered to ensure successful outcomes for the Pacific and Timor-Leste and Australian employers.

Up-front travel costs

How can PALM scheme employers recoup up-front travel costs?

The Government will reimburse costs **that cannot be recouped** from seasonal workers through no fault of the employer. For example, due to unexpected flight changes, cancellations or where workers disengage.

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

Who will be eligible?

Only employers of seasonal workers will be eligible to seek a reimbursement. We will work with stakeholders on processes for employers to claim reimbursement.

When will this start?

The policy is expected to commence in mid-2023.

Why are you only underwriting seasonal worker travel costs and not long-term PALM scheme workers?

Employers of seasonal/short term workers generally face higher up-front travel costs as they are required to book return airfares for each worker, while employers of long-term workers (up to 4 years) are only required to arrange and pay for one way travel due to the longer period of time in Australia. Please note, coverage of one-way travel for long-term workers is required under current settings as it is not possible to purchase flights more than 12 months in advance of departure.

Underwriting up-front travel costs that cannot be recouped by seasonal workers will make the program more attractive for employers of seasonal workers, particularly farmers, by ensuring that employers aren't out of pocket, thereby reducing the risks associated with outlaying high up-front travel costs.

Will workers need to pay more tax or superannuation to fund this initiative?

No. Workers will continue to pay back their travel costs through deductions from their wages.

Relocating the Australian Agriculture Visa under the PALM scheme

Will there be an Australian Agriculture Visa?

There will no longer be a separate Australian Agriculture Visa (AAV). The Government has committed to relocating the former AAV program under the PALM scheme. The scheme's settings will be adjusted to reflect key features of the AAV.

How will the PALM scheme be adjusted to reflect the Australian Agriculture Visa?

These features will be discussed and negotiated with stakeholders in the coming 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 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.

