

# Family accompaniment - information for workers

9 May 2023

## What is family accompaniment?

The Australian Government has committed to allowing Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme workers on long-term placements of between one and 4 years to bring their families to Australia, with the agreement of their employer.

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

## Who can apply?

Family accompaniment will be available for **long-term PALM scheme workers** (one to 4-year visas) who have the **agreement of their employer** to bring their family to Australia. To be eligible, workers will need to have spent 12 months in Australia.

**There may be other eligibility criteria** - this is still being developed.

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

## Which family members can accompany PALM scheme workers?

- Family members will be required to demonstrate that they are either a spouse or de facto partner of the PALM scheme visa holder, or a dependent child.
- A dependent child must be the biological child, step-child or adopted child of the PALM scheme worker.

## Is there an age limit for dependent children?


- Children must be:
  - aged under 18 years, or
  - aged 18 to 23 years and dependent on the PALM scheme worker or their partner, or
- The dependent child (<https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/help-support/glossary#child>) of the child above.

## When will family accompaniment start?

**Please don't book flights for your family yet.**

Family accompaniment is expected to start in the fourth quarter of 2023. The Australian Government is currently working on the eligibility criteria and the arrangements that need to be in place to make sure you and your family have a positive experience in Australia.

We also need to set up visa arrangements for partners and dependents before we can start welcoming families to Australia.



Once these details are settled, we will provide further information. In the meantime, we are listening to the views of Pacific and Timor-Leste governments, workers, employers and community organisations to help shape implementation of the policy to ensure we get the settings right.

## **What should PALM scheme workers and their families consider before applying for a family accompaniment visa?**

Before you decide to apply to bring your family to Australia, there are some things you might like to consider.

- There will be costs associated with moving to Australia including passports, visas, travel expenses, health checks, setting up a home and sourcing stationery, laptops and uniforms for children attending school.
- It is expensive to live in many parts of Australia, so families should think about whether they have enough income to support a family in Australia.
- It can be difficult for families to find suitable and affordable accommodation in many parts of Australia right now, so this may limit opportunities for some families seeking to join PALM scheme workers.
- Opportunities for partners and dependents to work in Australia will depend on job vacancy rates where you live, English language and skills requirements (where relevant). In some cases, PALM scheme approved employers may have work to offer a spouse or dependent, while in other locations, there may be few work opportunities.

## **What benefits will PALM families receive while living in Australia?**

- **Partners (wife, husband, de facto) will be able to work and study in Australia.**
- **Children will be able to go to school.**
- Eligible families will have access to family assistance benefits, namely the Family Tax Benefit and the Child Care Subsidy. The Child Care Subsidy provides assistance to help with the cost of sending a child to an approved child care service.
- The Government will provide access to Medicare for the initial 200 families who will participate in the PALM scheme family accompaniment pilot. Medicare access will support families receive the health care they need during their time in Australia.

## **Will all PALM scheme workers have access to Medicare?**

Access to Medicare will only be provided for the 200 workers and their families participating in the Government's family accompaniment pilot.

## **Does access to Medicare mean PALM scheme workers don't need to obtain private health insurance?**

Medicare does not cover all health care costs. The Government is still assessing whether there will be any requirement for PALM scheme families participating in the family accompaniment pilot to hold some level of private health insurance.



## Where can I find out more information?

Further information on family accompaniment, including when it will start, will be provided in the coming months on the PALM scheme website (<https://www.palmscheme.gov.au>).

The Australian Government has also announced the creation of the Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV) which will provide an opportunity for permanent migration to Australia.

This is a separate program from the PALM scheme. If you would like more information on the Pacific Engagement Visa, please visit the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade website (<https://www.dfat.gov.au/pacific-engagement-visa>).