



# How to recruit PALM scheme workers

## Why choose the PALM scheme?

Recruiting Pacific and Timor-Leste workers through the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme may be a good solution if you can't find enough local labour.

There are 37,790 (as at 31 March 2023) PALM scheme workers in Australia. The PALM scheme is an uncapped, demand-driven program available to fill workforce shortages in most sectors.

There are PALM scheme workers in all states and territories in many sectors, including agriculture, meat processing, care/aged care, hospitality, tourism and light manufacturing. Labour market testing is required to ensure Australian workers are not available and to protect Australian jobs.

PALM scheme employers have reported that Pacific and Timorese workers are reliable, hardworking, kind and professional. An ABARE survey found the productivity of PALM seasonal workers was, on average 20 per cent higher than that of working holiday makers in the horticulture industry.

Many workers participate in local sporting, church and community activities and often return for multiple seasons. Many workers send a portion of the money they earn home to support their families and communities in the Pacific and Timor-Leste.

The PALM scheme visa is a sponsored visa and requires employers to join the program. Should you want to recruit Pacific or Timor-Leste workers, the Australian Government will support you throughout the recruitment application, employment and repatriation stages.

There are more than 37,000 (as at January 2023) Pacific and Timor-Leste workers who have applied to work under the scheme and who have been vetted by Government Labour Sending Units (LSUs) in each participating country.

These workers will be drawn on once approved employers (AE) submit a recruitment application. It is mandatory under the program to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

## What is the PALM scheme?

The PALM scheme allows eligible employers to engage seasonal and longer-term workers to fill unskilled, low-skilled or semi-skilled positions. Seasonal and longer-term workers can be employed in any sector and in all regional and rural postcodes, except for agriculture which applies to all of Australia.

### Employers can recruit:

- Seasonal workers for jobs up to 9 months (the same workers can return annually under a 4-year multi-entry visa)
- long-term workers for roles between 1 and 4 years.

The Australian Government connects Australian employers with PALM workers through the Pacific Labour Facility (PLF), which supports the administration of the PALM scheme.



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## What are the major costs and responsibilities?

Workers are paid in line with Australian workplace relations laws. Accommodation is paid for by workers but organised by employers and must meet agreed standards. Some pre-departure costs incurred by employers may be deducted from worker salaries (with worker's written agreement). Employers must provide pastoral care and retain a duty of care for their workers.

## How do I recruit PALM workers?

Australian businesses can recruit workers directly once they have become an approved employer (AE). To become an AE, your business must meet eligibility criteria, including evidence that you have been unable to recruit Australian workers (labour market testing), a history of compliance with Australian workplace laws, and proven financial stability. Non-agricultural businesses (such as accommodation) are restricted to rural and regional postcodes.

An AE will also need to become a temporary activity sponsor through the Department of Home Affairs to be able to bring workers to Australia. Once all your documentation has been provided, it will take at least 3 months to process your application.

**All AEs will need to sign up to the PALM scheme.** [Click here to start the process.](#) You will be supported by the PALM scheme ([enquiries@pacificlabourfacility.com.au](mailto:enquiries@pacificlabourfacility.com.au)) throughout the entire process.

## Other options to recruit PALM scheme workers

Alternatively, if you require workers more quickly or do not wish to become an AE, there are labour hire companies across Australia that are registered as AEs that can be contacted to recruit PALM scheme workers on your behalf. While labour hire companies tend to focus on recruiting larger cohorts, they may be able to assist with your recruitment. You will need to negotiate payment arrangements with the relevant labour hire company.

[Click here](#) for a full list of PALM scheme employers, including labour hire companies.

## How long does it take for workers to arrive once I am an approved employer?

Recruitment and mobilisation activities commence after you become an AE.

Similar to employment practices for Australian workers that are moving for work, processes can take up to 8 weeks, so we encourage you to start as soon as possible. Key steps are:

- Employer submits a recruitment application to LSU and DEWR/PLF (outlines how many workers, country preferences, skill requirements, accommodation). We will process it within 2 weeks, subject to receipt of all requested details.
- LSUs identify workers with correct skills and offer opportunities to workers.
- AEs send offers of employment /contracts to workers: it is mandatory that employment contracts are signed offshore before the worker arrives. LSUs assist workers to understand the contracts in language and sign contracts.
- Workers undertake police and health checks to meet visa requirements. Visa applications are then submitted to Australia's Department of Home Affairs.
- Visa applications are assessed and issued by the Department of Home Affairs (who may request more information).
- LSUs provide workers with pre-departure briefings (2 to 3 days) on program requirements, Australian workplace laws, workers' rights, Australian culture and life.
- Workers arrive in Australia by a commercial or charter flight (often used for large groups). AEs will conduct a briefing and orientation for workers on arrival.

## Need more information?

Visit the PALM scheme website: [www.palmscheme.gov.au](http://www.palmscheme.gov.au)