



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 for businesses who can't find enough local labour.

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 Pacific and Timorese workers to be reliable, hardworking, kind and professional. An ABARE survey found the productivity of PALM scheme short-term workers was, on average 20% 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 50,000 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 PALM scheme employers 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 short-term and long-term workers to fill unskilled, low-skilled or semi-skilled positions. Both short-term and long-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:

- short-term 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 one and 4 years.

The Australian Government connects Australian employers with PALM scheme workers and supports the administration of the 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 predeparture costs incurred by employers may be deducted from worker salaries (with workers' written agreement). Employers must provide pastoral care and retain a duty of care for their workers.

How do I recruit PALM scheme workers?

Australian businesses can recruit workers directly once they have become an approved PALM scheme employer. To become a PALM scheme employer, businesses must meet eligibility criteria, including evidence of being 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.

Employers also need to become temporary activity sponsors through the Department of Home Affairs to be able to bring workers to Australia. Once all documentation has been provided, it will take at least 3 months to process applications to join the scheme.

All approved employers will need to sign up through the application on the PALM scheme website, and will be supported by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) throughout the process.

Other options to recruit PALM scheme workers

Alternatively, for businesses who require workers more quickly or do not wish to become a PALM scheme employer, there are labour hire companies approved under the scheme 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 recruitment. Businesses will need to negotiate payment arrangements with the relevant labour hire company.

The PALM scheme website contains a list of PALM scheme employers, including labour hire companies.

How long after becoming an approved employer will workers arrive?

Recruitment and mobilisation activities commence immediately after businesses are approved as PALM scheme employers.

Similar to employment practices for Australian workers who are moving for work, processes can take up to 8 weeks, so it is recommended to start as soon as possible. Key steps are:

- employer submits a recruitment application to LSU and DEWR (outlines how many workers, country preferences, skill requirements, accommodation). This will be processed within 2 weeks, subject to receipt of all requested details.
- LSUs identify workers with correct skills and offer opportunities to workers.
- employer sends 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 and visa applications are submitted to Australia's Department of Home Affairs
- visa applications are assessed and issued by the Department of Home Affairs (which may request more information)
- LSUs provide workers with predeparture briefings (2 to 3 days) on program requirements, Australian workplace laws, workers' rights, Australian culture
- workers arrive in Australia by a commercial or charter flight (often used for large groups). Employers conduct a briefing/orientation for workers on arrival.

Need more information?

Visit the PALM scheme website: www.palmscheme.gov.au