

Conditional approval of accommodation plans

This factsheet is designed to support Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme employers to meet the eligibility criteria for conditional approval of an accommodation plan.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations is committed to strengthening administrative processes to support employers to ensure PALM scheme workers are provided accommodation that meets the requirements of the [PALM scheme Approved Employer Guidelines](#).

Intent of conditional approvals

A conditional approval allows employers to submit an accommodation plan without all the final details. This will give greater flexibility for employers when securing accommodation for PALM scheme workers.

By allowing a conditional approval of accommodation plans, employers can finalise the minimum accommodation requirements closer to worker arrivals and a recruitment plan can proceed to approval without delay.

This approach will be available for a trial period through to the end of December 2024. After this, the department will review the approach and any feedback provided before implementing a permanent approach.

When may conditional approval be considered?

A conditional approval of an accommodation plan may be considered when an employer has secured a property, but the property does not currently meet all [minimum requirements](#). This could be due to the following:

- the property is unfurnished or unequipped (such as appliances or furnishing)
- the property requires minor repairs
- additional or updated photos of the property are required.

Applying for conditional approval

To apply for conditional approval, employers must submit an accommodation plan through the PALM information system (PALMIS) and clearly document in detail the need for conditional approval. The diagram flow chart below outlines the steps to apply. Importantly, the employer must comply with any conditions imposed by the department. Any outstanding requirements must be submitted with photo evidence in PALMIS no later than 2 weeks prior to worker arrival.

It is important to remember that an accommodation plan can be submitted for conditional approval before a recruitment plan has been submitted

Note: A recruitment plan must be approved 5 weeks ahead of worker arrivals. To avoid delay to this requirement, an accommodation plan must have at least conditional approval 5 weeks ahead of worker arrivals, with a submission for final approval no later than 2 weeks prior.

Process for requesting a conditional approval of an accommodation plan

1. Employer submits their completed accommodation plan in PALMIS.

Employer must clearly state in the accommodation plan or supplementary form that they are:

- seeking conditional approval
- the reason for seeking conditional approval (e.g. waiting for furniture to be delivered)
- when the workers are expected to arrive
- what their contingency plan is if the conditional approval requirements are not met by the due date.

Note: If waiting for furniture, the employer should outline the intended fit out of the property and provide evidence of furniture ordered, such as an invoice.



2. An assessment officer will review and assess the accommodation plan, ensuring all other requirements apart from the conditional approval needs are met. If required, the assessment officer will provide feedback and request action items. The employer is to action items where necessary.



3. The assessment officer will determine if the conditional approval request meets the requirements and will detail the conditional approval by PALMIS correspondence to the employer.



4. No later than 2 weeks prior to worker arrivals, the employer is to provide the outstanding accommodation plan requirements in PALMIS by attaching updated/additional photos to the accommodation plan and resubmitting the plan for final approval.



5. To avoid delay, the employer is to notify their relationship manager by phone or email that the outstanding items have been submitted in PALMIS for final approval.



6. If all outstanding requirements are met, the assessment officer will advise the employer and relationship manager that the accommodation plan is approved prior to worker arrivals.



What happens if the conditional approval requirements are not met?

It is the responsibility of the employer to provide the outstanding documentation no later than 2 weeks ahead of worker arrivals. If a full approval is not granted by the department ahead of the worker arrivals, the employer is required to:

- provide alternative accommodation
- cover all costs to accommodate workers until the final approval is secured and workers are in approved accommodation - this includes both the alternative site and planned accommodation site, and any other incidentals associated with the alternative site such as transport or meals.

Where temporary alternative accommodation cannot be secured, the mobilisation of the workers will be delayed, with any cost associated with flight and transport changes to be covered by the employer.

Note: The department will not extend the flexibility of conditional approvals to employers who are repeatedly unable to meet the requirements.

Conditional approval scenarios

Employer unable to secure timely delivery of furniture can receive conditional approval

Kai has been a PALM scheme employer for 6 months. Kai has secured accommodation that meets the requirements of the guidelines, however the delivery of furniture has been unexpectedly delayed and will not arrive at the accommodation in time for the recruitment plan to be approved. Kai has been in regular contact with the furniture provider attempting to secure the furniture arrival date. He also reached out to their PALM scheme relationship manager via a telephone conversation to explain the situation and was informed of the accommodation conditional approval process. Kai submitted an accommodation plan seeking conditional approval while waiting for the furniture to be delivered. Kai included a copy of the furniture order invoice as evidence and conditional approval was granted. The furniture was delivered prior to workers arriving, and Kai resubmitted the accommodation plan with photos demonstrating the final set up of furniture. The accommodation plan was then fully approved.

Employer has not yet identified an accommodation site and cannot receive conditional approval

Nancy is the director of a medium-sized food processing PALM scheme employer. Nancy is still searching for suitable accommodation in the area but is confident there are plenty of rental options. Nancy submits an accommodation plan with the intent to secure a property that meets minimum requirements and has advised that she is seeking conditional approval. As Nancy has not identified a suitable accommodation site and not met the other PALM scheme accommodation minimum requirements, she is not eligible for a conditional approval.

Employer making minor repairs can receive conditional accommodation approval

Paradise Industries is a large PALM scheme employer in northern South Australia. It has secured 20 transportable accommodation units in readiness for worker arrivals. During the transportation process, 5 of the accommodation units received minor damage to some windows. Photographic evidence of the damage has been provided to the PALM scheme assessment officer as part of a conditional approval request. Paradise Industries has been granted conditional approval, on the condition that it supply photo evidence of the completed repair works. The PALM scheme assessment officer explained the outcome and conditional approval details via correspondence in PALMIS.

Final approval of accommodation plan has not been approved in time for worker arrivals

Penny is the director of a large agricultural company based in Western Australia that is a long-term PALM scheme employer. Ten portable accommodation units for workers have been secured and delivered, but as the units still require minor works (installation of fans, cooking appliances and furniture), Penny requested a conditional approval of an accommodation plan. Penny provided a detailed summary of all items requiring conditional approval including invoices for appliances, furniture purchased, and contractors engaged to complete the works. A conditional approval was granted. Fourteen days ahead of worker arrivals, Penny called her relationship manager to advise there had been a delay in installing the appliances and fans and they would not meet the conditional approval requirements ahead of worker arrivals. The relationship manager instructed Penny that alternative accommodation would need to be provided for the workers, and the cost to accommodate the workers in both the alternative site and planned accommodation would need to also be covered. Two days after the workers' arrival, Penny provided photo evidence that the outstanding conditional approval had been met. The department granted full approval of the accommodation plan 6 days later and the workers were moved into the planned accommodation.

Additional resources

- Accommodation minimum accommodation requirements checklist: <https://www.palmscheme.gov.au/resources/minimum-accommodation-requirements-checklist>.
- Accommodation plan supplementary information form: Please contact your relationship manager or email the accommodation assessments team at (palmaccommodation@dewr.gov.au) for a copy.
- Refer to chapter 10 of the PALM Scheme Approved Employer Guidelines for the requirements of accommodation for workers: <https://www.palmscheme.gov.au/resources/palm-scheme-approved-employer-guidelines>.
- Refer to clauses 9 and 13 of the PALM scheme Approved Employer Deed of Agreement for the accommodation and recruitment obligations: <https://www.palmscheme.gov.au/resources/palm-scheme-approved-employer-deed-agreement>.