

PALM scheme family accompaniment pilot

What is the family accompaniment pilot?

The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme family accompaniment pilot is an initiative to allow up to 200 PALM scheme workers on long-term placements (between one and 4 years) the opportunity to bring their families to Australia, with the agreement of their employer.

The Australian Government has introduced family accompaniment as part of broader efforts to support the wellbeing of workers and their families while they are in Australia. This policy responds to a key concern of Pacific countries and workers related to the negative social impacts of long periods of family separation. This initiative reflects the Government's commitment to finding balanced solutions that address both the needs of workers and the interests of labour sending countries.

The family accompaniment policy is being implemented as a pilot and has been purposefully limited to a small cohort of up to 200 families to test the program's policy settings and implementation arrangements.

Families will be able to remain in Australia for the duration of the worker's visa, after which all family members will return to their home country.

Unlike the Pacific Engagement Visa, the family accompaniment pilot does not offer a path to permanent residency in Australia.

How were participants selected?

There are 5 countries participating in the pilot: Fiji, Kiribati, Timor-Leste, Tonga and Vanuatu.

Two selection processes were conducted in 2024 to identify participants in the pilot.

The pilot required both workers, families and employers to meet criteria to be selected. For workers, this included needing employer support to apply, being on a long-term placement and being a national of a participating country. To be eligible, family members need to be an immediate family member of the worker, possess basic English skills, and agree to attend a pre-departure briefing.

Employers were required to be a direct employer of PALM scheme workers for a period of at least 18 months and have a good track record with the PALM scheme.

In total, 205 workers and their families were selected, with 24 employers participating.

The first family members participating in the pilot arrived in Australia in August 2024.

What support do families receive?

Prior to travelling to Australia, family members receive support with their visa application from family accompaniment coordinators based in labour sending units in each of the participating countries. They also receive a comprehensive pre-departure briefing that provides information about living in Australia. On arrival, they are supported by a family liaison officer to help them transition into their new communities, and to connect them to services and supports they may require.

Partners are able to work or study, and children are able to attend school. Families can apply for Medicare, the Family Tax Benefit and the Child Care Subsidy on arrival in Australia.

Employers in the pilot have additional obligations to participating workers and their family members under the PALM scheme Approved Employer Deed and Guidelines. These are included in an [annexure](#) to the guidelines.

What will happen after the pilot?

The Australian Government will carefully monitor and evaluate the pilot. Decisions on the future of a family accompaniment policy will be informed by evidence from the pilot and feedback from PALM scheme stakeholders.

Questions

Any questions on the family accompaniment pilot can be sent to PALMfamilies@dfat.gov.au.