

Frequently asked questions - Re-engagement of previously disengaged PALM scheme workers

The PALM scheme re-engagement process provides Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme employers with an opportunity to access workers who are already in Australia and available for employment, while supporting eligible PALM scheme workers to remain in lawful employment.

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) assesses workers for suitability before referral and provides support throughout the process. Re-engagement can help employers address workforce shortages, reduce recruitment timeframes and access workers who are already familiar with living and working in Australia.

This frequently asked questions document outlines the re-engagement process, explains how workers are assessed, and answers common questions from employers considering re-engagement opportunities.

Benefits for employers

Why should I consider re-engaging a worker?

Re-engagement can provide a practical and flexible workforce solution.

Potential benefits include:

- workers are already in Australia
- earlier commencement compared to offshore recruitment
- reduced recruitment and mobilisation costs
- reduced training and onboarding requirements
- workers who are familiar with Australian workplaces and communities
- opportunity to support vulnerable workers

Are re-engaged workers experienced?

Many workers being considered for re-engagement have previously worked in Australia under the PALM scheme and have experience living and working in Australian communities.

Does re-engagement reduce labour market testing requirements?

Yes.

Streamlined labour market testing arrangements may be available under existing PALM scheme settings. Employers can discuss specific requirements with the Re-engagement Team.

Can re-engagement help fill urgent vacancies?

Yes.

Because workers are already onshore, re-engagement may enable employers to fill workforce gaps more quickly than recruiting workers from offshore.

Worker suitability and risk

How does DEWR determine whether a worker is suitable for re-engagement?

Workers are individually assessed before being referred for re-engagement opportunities.

To be suitable, workers must:

- no longer be working for their original PALM scheme employer and have asked to return to the PALM scheme
- be in Australia with a valid subclass 403 visa, with at least 6 months validity left
- have a reason for leaving work that the department assesses as valid
- not have any current criminal matters before the courts.

Further assessments may consider:

- employment history
- engagement records
- previous participation in the PALM scheme
- suitability for available employment opportunities.

It is important that employers maintain accurate and comprehensive records in the PALM Information System, as worker employment history and engagement records are considered during suitability assessments and can influence future referral and re-engagement opportunities.

Does DEWR conduct police checks or health assessments?

No.

DEWR does not undertake federal or state police checks or health assessments as part of the re-engagement process. Employers remain responsible for conducting any checks required for their business, industry or workplace.

Will I receive information about a worker before making a decision?

Yes.

Employers will receive relevant information to help determine whether a worker may be suitable for their workforce requirements. The exact information provided will depend on the circumstances and available opportunities.

Recruitment and employment

Do I have to employ every worker referred to me?

No.

Employers retain full discretion regarding recruitment decisions and are not required to employ a worker simply because they have been referred.

Can I use my normal recruitment process?

Yes.

Employers should continue to use their usual recruitment, screening, onboarding and workplace policies when considering workers through re-engagement.

Are the expectations of workers different under re-engagement?

No.

All PALM scheme requirements and expectations regarding lawful behaviour, workplace conduct and compliance continue to apply.

Do re-engaged workers count towards my PALM scheme obligations?

Yes.

Employers must continue to meet all relevant PALM scheme obligations and requirements for any worker they employ under the scheme. Employers with questions about specific arrangements should discuss them with the Re-engagement Team.

Getting involved

How do I express interest in re-engagement opportunities?

Employers can contact DEWR to discuss their workforce needs and learn more about available opportunities.

Please note, expressing interest does not create an obligation to employ workers.

What happens after I express interest?

DEWR will:

1. discuss your workforce requirements
2. answer any questions about the process
3. identify suitable opportunities where available
4. provide information to assist your recruitment decisions
5. support you throughout the process.

Who can I contact for more information?

For further information, employers can contact the PALM scheme support service line on (1800 51 51 31) or email (palm@dewr.gov.au).