

FACT SHEET

A single, consolidated Pacific labour mobility scheme

- 1) From 4 April 2022, existing Pacific worker programs will be replaced by a new, single Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme, simplifying administration and reducing duplication.
 - a) Stakeholders will no longer need to engage with 2 different departments, systems and processes, with the consolidated program to be managed by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade with the support of DFAT's provider the Pacific Labour Facility (PLF).
 - b) A single Deed of Agreement and employer guidelines setting out program arrangements and employer responsibilities will reduce duplication and streamline arrangements for employers. Consultation on the draft deed for the new program will commence shortly.
 - c) A new IT platform will deliver efficiencies for employers and Pacific governments, with all recruitment and mobilisation activities to be managed through a single portal.

More flexible program settings

- 2) The PALM scheme will deliver new flexibilities, including:
 - a) a single PALM scheme visa stream, with the option to recruit seasonal workers to fill short-term positions or staff for longer-term roles;
 - b) extended visa validity of up to 4 years, with provision for multiple entry to Australia, providing employers with greater workforce stability and giving workers more time to develop skills, complete qualifications and earn income to send home to their families;
 - c) more flexibility for workers to move between employers in response to workforce demands, improving productivity and workers' earning capacity:
 - i) these arrangements will be overseen by the PLF and government, to ensure worker wellbeing is maintained;
 - ii) granting a 9-month visa stay period to all seasonal workers, including those with an initial contract for a shorter period. This will enable workers to remain in Australia on their PALM visa for up to 9 months to accept further work with a PALM scheme employer.
 - d) the ability for some PALM seasonal workers nominated by employers to apply for a PALM scheme visa onshore to be employed in longer-term work, providing improved career pathways for workers;
 - e) increased support for worker skills development;
 - f) more targeted use of recruitment caps, with caps only routinely applied to new employers until satisfactorily completing a performance review at the end of their first recruitment reporting period:

- i) recruitment caps will no longer apply to existing employers with a good track record of recruiting Pacific workers but may be utilised where there are performance concerns.
- g) making recent changes to labour market testing (LMT) a permanent feature of the PALM scheme, with LMT to remain valid for 12 months:
 - i) and a commitment to work with industry to further explore improvements to the effectiveness of LMT, for example for specific sectors;
 - ii) while ensuring Australians having first opportunity to fill available jobs.

Streamlined processes

3) Streamlined PALM scheme policy and program settings, including:

- a) a streamlined recruitment process for employers recruiting seasonal and/or longer-term workers under the PALM scheme;
- b) a commitment to work with employers to reduce the administrative burden related to approving suitable worker accommodation.

Protecting worker welfare

4) The PALM scheme will continue to deliver strong protections for workers, including:

- a) improved worker support arrangements, supported by welfare reporting requirements:
 - i) with support provided for community connections with workers;
 - ii) delivering continued support to workers and employers through the PLF;
 - iii) maintaining the paramount importance of worker wellbeing.
- b) continuing to help workers to better connect with their local communities, including through the Community Connections measure, which is delivered by The Salvation Army;
- c) a 24/7 worker welfare helpline;
- d) support for the Fair Work Ombudsman to proactively educate and support workers and employers on their rights and obligations under Australian workplace law and investigate when needed;
- e) the Australian Government to continue to deliver a holistic, robust assurance approach to provide oversight and ensure program integrity.

A strong regional presence

5) The PALM scheme will deliver a strong presence in regional Australia:

- a) PALM scheme relationship managers will be located in every Australian state and territory, ensuring an on-the-ground presence of staff with local knowledge, better able to support program delivery and located close to employers and workers.

For more information, please visit www.palmscheme.gov.au/faq.

