

## **NEW PACIFIC LABOUR MOBILITY POLICIES**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Family accompaniment for long-term sponsored PALM workers**

##### **Will PALM scheme workers be able to bring their family to Australia?**

PALM scheme long term workers will be allowed to bring their partners and children to Australia, commencing in 2023, subject to Australian employer sponsorship. This policy will apply to PALM long term workers but not PALM short-term/seasonal workers, reflecting the longer stays of this cohort of workers in Australia. The Government will consult with employers, Pacific and Timor-Leste governments and community organisations on this policy to shape its implementation.

##### **Why is the government introducing a family accompaniment policy?**

Allowing families to accompany PALM long-term workers will address a key concern for Pacific countries and workers related to the social impact of extended periods of family separation. Family accompaniment will also foster deeper connections with our Pacific family and enable more Pacific children to experience life in Australia.

##### **When can workers start bringing their families to Australia?**

The new policy will be rolled out during 2023.

##### **What is the eligibility criteria for family accompaniment?**

The Australian Government is currently considering the eligibility criteria for family accompaniment. We will consult with employers and listen to the views of Pacific governments, workers and community organisations to shape implementation of the policy to ensure we get the settings right.

##### **What are the visa conditions for families?**

The Government is currently considering the visa conditions that will apply to families. But has committed to the following key settings:

- secondary visas available for partners and dependent children (includes dependent children aged up to 24 years)
- employer sponsorship required to bring family to Australia
- family members to meet health and character requirements
- secondary visa holders entitled to live, work and study in Australia.

##### **Will family members also need a visa?**

Yes, all members of the family unit (known as secondary applicants) wishing to accompany the PALM scheme worker (or primary visa holder) to Australia will need to hold a valid visa. Secondary applicants will need to meet health and character requirements in order to be granted a visa.

##### **How much will the visa cost for family members?**

The visa application charge (VAC) for the current subclass 403 PALM scheme visa is \$325. The VAC for secondary applicants is yet to be determined.

##### **Can family members come immediately with the PALM worker, or is there a waiting period?**

Workers are required to be employer sponsored. Time period for sponsorship is currently under design.

**Will there be a limit on the number of family members who can accompany the worker?**

The Australian Government is currently considering the implementation details but is likely that secondary applicants will need to be the main applicant's spouse and children. Workers will need to have sufficient income to support a large family in Australia.

**Will the worker's spouse have work rights?**

Yes, secondary visa holders will be entitled to work in Australia.

**How will families access healthcare in Australia?**

PALM scheme workers are currently required to hold appropriate health insurance. The Australian Government is currently considering the healthcare settings that will apply to families of PALM scheme workers.

**Can children access early childhood education services including childcare?**

Yes. There are no restrictions on children attending early childhood education services including childcare. In some areas in Australia, childcare is in scarce supply and can be a costly service to purchase. The Government is currently considering implementation details.

**Can children attend Australian primary and secondary schools?**

Yes. Delivery of primary and secondary school is the responsibility of States and Territories, and fees and levies vary across jurisdictions. The Government will consult with States and Territories on this issue and provide comprehensive advice on educational arrangements as soon as possible.

**Can families access Vocational Education Training (VET) and higher education?**

Yes. The Government recognises that VET and higher education will provide many educational benefits to dependents accompanying the primary PALM scheme worker. There is no restriction on enrolment in VET and higher education, but under proposed settings family members of workers cannot access financial assistance for higher education. The Government is currently considering the implementation details.

**How will families find appropriate and affordable housing in regional and remote areas?**

The Australian Government recognises that appropriate and affordable regional housing in some regional areas can be in short supply. We will consult with employers and Pacific governments to identify barriers to accessing suitable housing. Housing affordability and availability is likely to be a sponsorship consideration for employers based on conditions in the local community.

**Will this policy reduce remittance flows?**

Remittance flows are one of the many positive outcomes of the PALM scheme. The Government is committed to better understanding the impact that this policy may have on remittance flows. Although for some families, remittances may reduce or cease, there are significant benefits for families such as access to the Australian education system, employment opportunities for spouses and further skills development. The Government will consult with employers and Pacific governments on this issue.

**Will this policy lead to 'brain drain'?**

The skills and educational dividend to the Pacific is likely to be enhanced - 'brain gain' instead of 'brain drain'. Children will receive an Australian education and working spouses will have an opportunity to gain skills and employment experience. This will benefit Pacific communities when



families and workers return home. We will work with our Pacific and Timor-Leste partners to mitigate unintended social impacts of family accompaniment.

**Will employers be expected to support families?**

Employer sponsors must agree to a worker bringing their family to Australia. DFAT recognises that employers have many questions about their roles and responsibilities under this new policy. The Government will consult with employers and industry in depth on this issue prior to implementation.

**Reducing the burden of upfront travel costs for employers of short-term/seasonal workers**

**Will the Australian Government be paying for workers' airfares?**

The Australian Government has committed to increasing the attractiveness of the scheme for Australian employers by reducing the burden of upfront travel costs for employers of short-term/seasonal workers. The mechanism for delivering on this commitment is currently being worked through and the Government will consult employers and industry to shape its development.

**When will it come into effect?**

The new policy will commence in 2023.

**Will this policy apply to long-term workers?**

No. This policy will apply to PALM scheme short-term/seasonal workers who arrive after the policy is implemented and operational.

**What are the benefits of this policy?**

The Government is reducing the burden of upfront travel costs for PALM employers, improving accessibility and the appeal of the scheme.

**Will employers still be responsible for arranging the travel for workers?**

Yes. Further consultations with industry and key stakeholders will consider all implementation details.

**Providing employers with flexibility to recruit the rights workers at the right time**

**Will seasonal workers be able to stay longer in Australia?**

The Government will enable more flexible placement lengths under the new, consolidated PALM scheme. Seasonal workers can access a four-year multi-entry visa which allows them to work in Australia for nine months out of every 12. The new scheme offers the flexibility to engage workers in longer-term placements of one to four years, and for short-term workers to move to long-term work onshore. Stakeholders have indicated they have appreciated the recently introduced flexibilities through the new [PALM stream visa](#).

**Relocating the Australian Agriculture Visa within the PALM Scheme**

**How will the Agriculture Visa be incorporated into the PALM scheme?**

We will consult Pacific stakeholders, industry and unions to get the settings right as we deliver the Government's commitment to relocate the Agriculture Visa within the PALM scheme by adopting relevant policy settings. Focusing on our Pacific family, we will continue to support the growth of Australian agriculture and address critical worker shortages in Australia.



**When will the Agriculture Visa be relocated into the PALM scheme?**

The Australian Government is currently considering the implementation detail of this policy. DFAT is consulting directly with governments and industry to shape its implementation.



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