



PACIFIC LABOUR SCHEME

At the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting on 8 September 2017 in Apia, Samoa, the Prime Minister announced the establishment of a new **Pacific Labour Scheme** (the Scheme) to enable citizens of Pacific island countries (PICs) to take up low and semi-skilled work opportunities in rural and regional Australia for up to three years.

The Scheme will:

- commence on 1 July 2018 with an initial intake of up to 2,000 workers;
- focus on sectors with projected employment growth in Australia and which match Pacific island skill sets;
- be employer-sponsored and require labour market testing to ensure Australians have priority for local jobs; and
- contain protections to safeguard against worker exploitation.

The Scheme will initially focus on Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu. Access will be extended to other PICs based on need, impact and progress on the PACER Plus regional trade agreement.

How will it work in practice?

Prospective employers will apply and be assessed and approved for participation in the Scheme by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). Employers will also be required to apply for 'Temporary Activities Sponsorship' approval by the Department of Home Affairs (DHA).

Approved employers will be required to advertise for workers in Australia with jobactive¹ providers (in their locality) to ensure that any jobs offered to Pacific workers cannot be filled by Australian job seekers. Once workers have received employment offers, they will be required to meet all relevant visa application requirements, including satisfying health and character checks.

The **Pacific Labour Facility** (PLF, see factsheet for further information) will connect Australian employers with Pacific workers and support the administration of the Scheme.

What industries and occupations will it cover?

The Scheme will focus on sectors and industries that generally match employment projections in Australia and Pacific skills sets:

- accommodation and food services industry (e.g. hospitality and tourism), where employment levels are projected to grow by around 100,000 for the five years to May 2022;
- health care and social assistance industry (e.g. aged care, disability care); where employment levels are projected to grow by around 250,000 for the five years to May 2022; and
- non-seasonal agriculture, forestry and fishing industries where employer demand remains high but employment levels are projected to decrease by 2,400 workers or 2.4 per cent for the five years to May 2022.

¹ For further information, please visit <https://www.jobs.gov.au/jobactive>



It will focus on low and semi-skilled occupations, i.e. Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations levels 3-5, requiring Australian Qualifications Framework Certificate Levels 1-4 or relevant work experience.

How will the Australian Government protect Australian jobs?

The Scheme is consistent with recent changes to Australia's skilled and temporary migration programs.

In line with 'Australian job seeker first' approach, approved employers under the Scheme will be required to advertise for workers in Australia with jobactive providers (in their locality) to ensure that any jobs offered to Pacific workers cannot be filled by Australian job seekers.

The Scheme is open to all sectors and industries where there is a genuine shortage of Australian workers and is employer-demand driven where an employer has demonstrated they cannot fill positions from the Australian labour market.

The Australian Government is responding to the genuine need of employers who cannot find enough local workers to meet their seasonal labour needs.

After the initial intake of up to 2,000 workers in 2018-19, the Australian Government will set annual caps for the Scheme to mitigate against displacing Australian job seekers. The process will take into account relevant considerations including youth unemployment rates by region, industries and skill levels. The Australian Government will also direct the use of Pacific workers away from sectors/regions with high unemployment, particularly among young Australians and entry-level workers.

How will the Australian Government protect Pacific workers?

The Australian Government does not tolerate the exploitation of foreign workers. All workers under the Scheme will be protected by Australian workplace laws, in the same manner as Australian workers.

Employers will be assessed and approved for participation in the Scheme by DFAT. Employers will also be required to apply for a 'Temporary Activities Sponsorship' by DIBP and comply with the relevant sponsorship obligations, including monitoring by the Australian Border Force.

The Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) will undertake compliance, education and outreach activities in high-risk industries where participants are working to ensure they and their employers are aware of their workplace rights and obligations.

Comprehensive pre-departure briefings and in-country support will be provided to workers to ensure they are informed of work rights and protections. This information covers topics related to living and working in Australia, such as workplace laws, the Australian culture, the role of the FWO, the role of unions, and taxation and superannuation arrangements.

Once in Australia, workers will be encouraged to discuss any concerns they may have with their employer, the Pacific Labour Facility or directly with the FWO. A dedicated 24/7 information and assistance hotline will be established by the PLF and provided to the workers prior to their arrival in Australia.

Please direct any queries on the Scheme to PacificLabourMobility@dfat.gov.au

