

NSW Government Feedback

Commonwealth changes to the PALM Scheme

Comments below, collated by NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) outline the NSW officials level response to Commonwealth changes to the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme

Feedback

NSW welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to inform the proposed reforms to the PALM Scheme, noting migration programs have impacts on NSW policies and programs and should be considered in Commonwealth policy design and consultation.

NSW recognises the importance of temporary visa-holders in our regions, the importance of the work undertaken by these visa-holders in supporting our region's economies and industries experiencing labour shortages and the social benefits for communities.

NSW is currently experiencing significant labour and skills shortages, including agricultural and seasonal workers, health professionals and teachers in regional and rural NSW. NSW welcomes additional migration and recognises that efficient planning and information-sharing between the Commonwealth and NSW is needed, to manage increased pressures on housing, government services (including health and education) and infrastructure.

NSW looks forward to continued involvement in the consultation and decision-making process about the PALM scheme.

1. Collaborative settlement planning and coordination

- NSW wants greater collaboration and forward planning between the Commonwealth and NSW Government to ensure that essential services, specialist supports, and local coordination mechanisms are established prior to new entrants arriving in NSW.
- Insufficient notice or coordination of the impact of Commonwealth migration programs places unexpected pressure on NSW Government services, including health, education, family and community service and legal support.
- NSW needs to see more efficient planning and information-sharing with the Commonwealth to manage increased pressures on housing, government services (including health and education) and infrastructure. NSW's ability to deliver on these critical needs has an impact on the viability of trials and the willingness of communities to accept new arrivals.
- The Commonwealth should use the Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group (SOSOG) to plan for the settlement of new migrant cohorts, given SOSOG aims to strengthen national collaborative planning arrangements.
- The NSW Government's Settlement Strategy (to be finalised and available for distribution early 2023) will also embed NSW's commitment to deliver a coordinated and collaborative approach to settlement policy and programs at the state level, and greater collaboration on settlement planning with the Commonwealth. While this strategy is primarily focused on refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants from similar backgrounds, it provides a framework for coordinating settlement services for communities and individuals.

2. Open exchange of information and timely data sharing

- To ensure the program is effective, open and timely data sharing is required between the Commonwealth and NSW regarding decisions on trial sites and the number of PALM scheme participants.
- If the Commonwealth could provide greater integrated data, this would enable NSW to better understand workforce trends, particularly those of the agriculture sector, to inform state and national policy, planning and investment in regional communities.
- NSW notes the role of industry and business in sponsoring visa-holders, which determines settlement locations, however, request greater and more direct collaboration on decision making regarding trial locations. This will ensure more successful settlement and integration for new entrants and the services and communities that support and welcome them.
- NSW notes the discussion paper raises the issue of health requirements and services that will be needed for accompanying family members. NSW requires greater information and engagement from the Commonwealth on this issue, to allow NSW health services to prepare for and meet the increased demand. Further information is also required from the Commonwealth to support education planning and services for those visa holders that are accompanied by their school-aged children.
- Such timely access and input on PALM arrivals – including numbers, locations and dates, family and cultural information – would enable NSW to:
 - Plan better access to and delivery of State government services to set arrivals up for settlement success, and
 - Work with regional communities to ensure they are better prepared to welcome new arrivals, for example building social cohesion.
- Adequate information and shared decision making will ensure new arrivals are placed in regional locations that offer services and opportunities to support their successful settlement.