



PACIFIC LABOUR SCHEME

The **Pacific Labour Scheme** (the Scheme) officially commenced on 1 July 2018. The Scheme, which was announced by then Prime Minister Turnbull at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting on 8 September 2017, is an exciting new chapter in Australia's engagement with Pacific island countries.

The Scheme currently enables citizens of Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu to take up low and semi-skilled work opportunities in rural and regional Australia for up to three years. Through these opportunities workers earn income and develop skills which benefit their families and communities. The Pacific Labour Scheme will help fill labour gaps in Australia's towns and on our farms, boosting economic activity and competitiveness in rural and regional Australia. The Scheme:

- is uncapped and includes 9 Pacific countries and Timor-Leste to help meet demand in rural and regional Australia;
- has an initial focus on sectors with projected employment growth in Australia;
- is employer-sponsored and requires labour market testing to ensure Australians have priority for local jobs; and
- contains protections to safeguard against worker exploitation.

How does it work in practice?

The Pacific Labour Facility supports programs that connect Australian employers with workers under the Scheme and supports the administration of the Scheme.

Prospective employers can apply and be assessed and approved for participation in the Scheme by DFAT. Employers are also required to apply for 'Temporary Activities Sponsorship' approval by the Department of Home Affairs.

We will work with Approved Employers and sending countries to support the selection and recruitment of suitable workers under the Scheme. Once workers have received employment offers, they are required to meet all relevant visa application requirements, including satisfying health and character checks. We will assist workers under the Scheme with all relevant pre-departure and on-arrival requirements. This will include ongoing pastoral care and support services in Australia.

What industries and occupations does it cover?

The Scheme is open to all sectors and industries with an initial focus on those that generally match employment projections in Australia:

- accommodation and food services industry (e.g. hospitality and tourism);
- health care and social assistance industry (e.g. aged care, disability care); and
- non-seasonal agriculture, forestry and fishing industries.



The Scheme focuses on low and semi-skilled occupations, i.e. Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations levels 3 to 5, requiring Australian Qualifications Framework Certificate Levels 1 to 4 or relevant work experience. The Australia Pacific Training Coalition, an Australian Government initiative, will provide many participants with Australian-standard vocational qualifications that will prepare them for work in Australia.

How will the Australian Government protect Australian jobs?

In line with 'Australian job seeker first' approach, Approved Employers are required to advertise for workers in Australia with jobactive¹ providers (in their locality) to ensure that any jobs offered to workers under the Scheme 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 Scheme has been uncapped to enable demand from Australian employers and our Pacific neighbours to drive the growth of the Scheme.

How will the Australian Government protect workers under the Scheme?

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

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

The Fair Work Ombudsman (FWO) undertakes compliance, education and outreach activities with workers under the Scheme to ensure that they and their employers are aware of their workplace rights and obligations.

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

Once in Australia, workers are encouraged to discuss any concerns they may have with their employer, the Facility or directly with the FWO. A dedicated 24/7 information and assistance hotline is provided to the workers prior to their arrival in Australia.

Please direct any queries on the Scheme to enquiries@pacificlabourfacility.com.au

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

