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MEDIA RELEASE

PACIFIC ENGAGEMENT VISA: **STRENGTHENING TIES WITH THE PACIFIC FAMILY**

The Albanese Government has taken a major step towards delivering on its commitment to strengthen Australia's ties with the Pacific family.

A new Pacific Engagement Visa will allow up to 3,000 nationals of Pacific island countries and Timor-Leste to migrate to Australia as permanent residents each year.

Boosting Pacific permanent migration to Australia is an essential part of the Government's plan to build a stronger Pacific family.

The Pacific Engagement Visa will grow Australia's Pacific and Timor-Leste diaspora, enhance people-to-people links, and encourage greater cultural, business and educational exchange.

Legislation introduced into Parliament today by the Hon Andrew Giles MP, Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, will enable a ballot to select applicants for the program, **commencing in July 2023.**

Applicants will register themselves, their partners and dependent children in the ballot, and if successful they will then apply for the visa, providing fair and transparent access to the program.

Requirements for being granted a visa include **being aged 18 to 45, having a formal offer for a full time job in Australia, and meeting basic English language, health and character requirements.**

The Pacific Engagement Visa is being designed in close consultation with Pacific island countries and Timor-Leste, to ensure the program meets shared needs and priorities.

For further information please see: [Pacific Engagement Visa | Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade \(dfat.gov.au\)](https://dfat.gov.au/pacific-engagement-visa)

Quote attributable to Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Penny Wong:

“The Government is committed to making a uniquely Australian contribution as partner of choice for the countries of the Pacific – demonstrating we are reliable, we turn up, show respect, listen, and are transparent and open.”

Quote attributable to Minister for International Development and the Pacific, the Hon Pat Conroy:

“The Pacific Engagement Visa is an important change in our permanent migration system and is an important way of building people-to-people links with the Pacific family and deepening ties to the region that's our home and critical to our future.

We will continue to listen to our partners in the Pacific and Timor-Leste as we finalise the design of the Pacific Engagement Visa and look forward to further discussions.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, the Hon Andrew Giles MP:

“The Pacific Engagement Visa will deliver on the Government's commitment to secure our region and build a stronger Pacific Family.

The legislation I introduced into parliament today demonstrates to the Australian community, and to our Pacific family, that stronger Pacific partnerships focused on shared needs and priorities are in Australia's national interest, and support stability, prosperity and security in our region.”

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Pacific Engagement Visa Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is the Pacific Engagement Visa?

The Pacific Engagement Visa is a new permanent resident visa for participating countries across the Pacific and Timor-Leste. The visa will commence in July 2023.

Up to 3,000 visas, **inclusive of partners and dependent children**, will be allocated annually to Pacific and Timor-Leste nationals through a ballot process.

The Pacific Engagement Visa will grow Australia's Pacific diaspora, build on our strong people-to-people links, and encourage greater cultural, business and educational exchange.

Which countries will be involved?

Priority is being given to countries with limited permanent migration opportunities to Australia, or citizenship rights with New Zealand, France and the United States.

Eligible countries could include **Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.**

The Australian Government continues to consult Pacific countries and Timor-Leste on their interest in participating in the program.

How will country allocations be determined?

Visa allocations will be based on several factors including population size, diaspora in Australia, existing migration opportunities and expected demand.

Allocations will be a decision for the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Minister for International Development and the Pacific.

The Government will be consulting further with Pacific partners on their inclusion and country allocations to ensure the program is delivering on shared needs and objectives.

Who will be eligible for the Pacific Engagement Visa?

To be eligible for the Pacific Engagement Visa, primary applicants will need to:

- be aged between 18 to 45 to enter the ballot
- be selected through the ballot process
- secure a formal job offer in Australia
- meet English language, character and health checks
- hold a passport for a participating country



- have been born in or have a parent who was born in a participating country.

Applicants can include a partner and legally dependent children in their application.

Further program settings and details, including ballot and visa eligibility requirements will be made available closer to the commencement of the program in July 2023.

What is the Pacific Engagement Visa ballot?

The ballot is an **electronic random selection process**, with successful entrants and their immediate family members able to apply for a Pacific Engagement Visa.

The ballot aims to provide eligible individuals from Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste fair and transparent access to the program by randomly selecting ballot participants. This includes providing access to the ballot for existing Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme (PALM) workers in Australia.

What is the cost to enter the Pacific Engagement Visa ballot?

The charge for entering the ballot is expected to be \$25.

Registrations will be valid for a year. If the registered person is not selected in that time, a new registration will need to be submitted for participants to enter the next ballot.

Applicants selected through the ballot will be able to apply for the visa within a specified timeframe. This will require paying the associated visa application charge.

Will visa holders be able to live and work anywhere in Australia?

Yes. This visa is a permanent visa and therefore applicants will be free to choose where they would like to live, work and study in Australia. There are no restrictions on work location, industry/type of work or employer.

What settlement support will be available?

The Pacific Engagement Visa program will include measures to support a positive settlement experience.

Planned supports include help to find work in Australia and access to a range of benefits to support the cost of raising a family and ease the financial burden of education and training.

This is in addition to the services and supports available to permanent residents upon arrival in Australia, including access to Australia's universal health care and public schools.

How will participants be supported to find employment and prepare for life in Australia?

The Australian Government will establish a service in the Pacific to connect successful applicants with employers in Australia, providing access to a variety of roles at a range of skill levels.

The resource will also guide successful applicants through the visa application process, deliver culturally and language relevant program outreach, and inform applicants about life in Australia.



How is the Pacific Engagement Visa different to the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme?

The Pacific Engagement Visa will offer a permanent resident visa to eligible citizens of Pacific island countries and Timor-Leste.

The PALM scheme is a temporary migration program that will continue to help meet workforce shortages in rural and regional Australia, support the economic development of Pacific countries, and build skills for when workers return home.

PALM scheme participants in Australia on valid temporary visas will be eligible to enter the Pacific Engagement Visa ballot when registrations open.

What legislative amendments need to be made?

The legislation introduced into the Australian Parliament in February 2023 will enable a ballot process to be conducted which will allow registered participants to be randomly selected to apply for the Pacific Engagement Visa.

The legislation also allows for a small fee to be charged to enter the ballot.

Further legislative changes will be required to enable implementation of the visa and ensure appropriate supports are extended to Pacific Engagement Visa holders upon arrival in Australia.



How is the Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV) different from the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme?

PALM scheme

The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme is a temporary migration program which allows eligible Australian businesses to hire workers from nine Pacific islands and Timor-Leste when there are not enough local workers available.

Through the PALM scheme, Pacific and Timor-Leste workers take up a range of short term (up to 9 months) and long-term job opportunities (one to four years) in low and semi-skilled positions, enabling them to develop skills and send income home to support their families and communities.

PALM scheme workers are required to depart Australia to encourage them to reconnect with their families and communities. This is for three months following the conclusion of a short-term placement and six months following the conclusion of a long-term placement.

Pacific Engagement Visa

The Pacific Engagement Visa is a new permanent resident visa program for participating countries across the Pacific and Timor-Leste, commencing in July 2023.

Each year up to 3,000 visas, inclusive of partners and dependent children, will be allocated to Pacific islanders from participating countries through a ballot process. First or second-generation nationals of participating countries can register for the ballot, including PALM scheme workers on a valid temporary visa.

The Pacific Engagement Visa seeks to grow Australia's Pacific and Timor-Leste diaspora, build on our strong people-to-people links, and encourage greater cultural, business, investment and educational exchange.



Program settings	Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme	Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV)
Purpose	The PALM scheme is a temporary migration program allowing workers to take up jobs in Australia, develop their skills and send income home to support their families and communities.	The PEV is a permanent residence visa aimed at building greater people, cultural, business, and educational links between Australia and the Pacific.
Participating countries	Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu	Countries in scope, subject to country agreement to participate: Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Republic of the Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu
Number of participants	Uncapped and demand driven	Capped at 3,000 visas each year (inclusive of partners and children)
Application process	Worker registers interest with the participating country labour sending agency and is placed in the country’s ‘work ready pool.’ Employer undertakes a recruitment process. Worker applies for an employer sponsored visa. Further details are available: How to apply PALM scheme (for workers) and Recruitment PALM scheme (for employers).	Eligible nationals from participating countries will be able to register in an annual ballot. An electronic system will randomly select entrants. Successful entrants and their immediate family will be able to apply for a PEV.
Length of stay in Australia	Short-term: up to 9 months Long-term: 1-4 years	Enables permanent stay in Australia
Visa type	Subclass 403 Temporary Work (International Relations) Visa	Permanent residency visa (subclass to be confirmed)



Program settings	Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme	Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV)
Eligibility	<p>21 years and over.</p> <p>Sponsored by a PALM scheme Approved Employer.</p> <p>English language (long-term work only), health and character requirements.</p>	<p>Citizen of a participating country.</p> <p>18-45 years of age to enter the ballot (applicants can include partner and legally dependent children in their application).</p> <p>Primary applicant to be selected through the ballot process.</p> <p>English language, formal job offer in Australia, health and character requirements.</p>
Employment	<p>Employer sponsored - must have received an offer of employment from a PALM scheme Approved Employer.</p> <p>Under the PALM visa conditions, workers cannot work with any employer other than their sponsor unless approved by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.</p>	<p>Must have received a full-time offer of employment in Australia to be eligible to be granted a PEV (job offer not required to enter the ballot).</p> <p>Can work for any employer in Australia.</p> <p>Support will be provided to connect successful ballot entrants with employers.</p>
Duration of work placements	<p>Short-term work: up to 9 months with the requirement that workers achieve a 'net financial benefit' during their stay.</p> <p>Long-term work: 1-4 years.</p>	<p>Can work for any employer without restriction.</p>
Location	<p>Employers in the agriculture sector can be based anywhere in Australia, including employers in agriculture-related food product manufacturing.</p> <p>Employers in other sectors must be based in regional or rural Australia.</p>	<p>No geographic restrictions</p>
Skill level	<p>Unskilled, low-skilled and semi-skilled</p>	<p>Any skill level</p>
Family/dependants	<p>PALM scheme short-term workers: cannot bring partner and dependents to Australia.</p> <p>PALM scheme long-term workers: 200 families will be selected to participate in Family Accompaniment in 2023-24.</p>	<p>Primary applicant can bring a partner and dependent children</p>



Program settings	Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme	Pacific Engagement Visa (PEV)
Access to benefits	<p>PALM scheme workers (short-term and long-term) must have health insurance.</p> <p>Pending legislative change, PALM scheme long-term workers who are participating in family accompaniment will have access to the Family Tax Benefit and the Child Care Subsidy.</p>	<p>Support as available to permanent residents, including access to Medicare, public schools, Child Care Subsidy and Family Tax Benefits.</p> <p>Pending legislative change, no waiting periods for Austudy or Youth Allowance, and access to income contingent student loans.</p>
Mobilisation costs	<p>PALM workers fund passport and health checks.</p> <p>PALM employer funds initial mobilisation costs (e.g., visa, flights) which they may recoup from workers through deductions from wages, less a \$300 employer contribution.</p>	<p>PEV holder responsible for all costs associated with moving and settling in Australia.</p>
Pre-departure support	<p>Yes</p> <p>Pre-departure briefings to provide culturally and language relevant information about employment and life in Australia.</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>A service will be established to connect applicants with Australian employers and support the visa application process.</p> <p>Pre-departure briefings will provide culturally and language relevant information about life in Australia.</p>
On-arrival support/welfare and wellbeing requirements	<p>Yes</p> <p>PALM employer is responsible for providing an on-arrival briefing; meeting accommodation standards, sufficient hours of work; and for the wellbeing of workers, including supporting connections to community and sporting groups, churches and diaspora groups.</p> <p>PALM scheme workers receive ongoing support from and through their:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ PALM scheme Approved Employers, ▪ PALM support service line, ▪ Country Liaison Officers / Labour Attachés 	<p>Yes</p> <p>Settlement support, including through the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) and the Settlement Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) program.</p>

