



Improving PALM – The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1. THE RIGHT TO CHANGE JOBS

If workers had mobility in the Australian labour market, poor employers would be forced to lift their standards or lose staff. Flexibility could be sector specific – meatworkers moving within the meat industry, horticultural workers within horticulture, aged care workers within aged care. Since two-thirds of all PALM workers are employed by labour hire agencies, mobility could allow workers to switch to a different labour hire agency, regardless of the job they do.

RECOMMENDATION 2. REDUCE REGULATION

Relax prescriptive rules, such as requiring designated welfare managers to meet face-to-face with workers every fortnight. Develop a “trusted trader” designation so approved employers with a good track record enjoy preferential treatment such as priority visa processing, reduced reporting obligations and streamlined administration.

RECOMMENDATION 3. NATIONAL LABOUR HIRE REGULATION

Implement national labour hire laws that match or exceed the standards set by state-based schemes in Queensland and Victoria.

RECOMMENDATION 4. REFORM WORKING HOLIDAY VISAS

Phase out the incentive of second and third visas for backpackers who complete “specified work” in a regional area. Unregulated working holiday programs invite exploitation, squeeze out PALM workers and limit the scheme’s developmental and diplomatic potential in the Pacific.

RECOMMENDATION 5. REINTEGRATION FOR DISENGAGED WORKERS

Develop a more versatile program to re-engage PALM workers who have left the scheme.

RECOMMENDATION 6. ACCESS TO MEDICARE

With Medicare access, PALM workers would be more likely to seek timely treatment for severe illnesses, reducing costs and increasing productivity. Access to Medicare is in keeping with the PALM scheme’s aim of promoting development and wellbeing in the Pacific and would free employers from organising private health insurance.

RECOMMENDATION 7. PATHWAYS TO PERMANENT RESIDENCY

Provide a pathway to permanent residence for long-term PALM workers on four-year visas who fill permanent gaps in the Australian labour market.

RECOMMENDATION 8. SUPERANNUATION

Simplify Departing Australia Superannuation Payments and reduce the tax on withdrawals, ideally to zero, or pay superannuation entitlements into eligible provident funds in home countries.

RECOMMENDATION 9. STAGGER DEPARTURE AND ARRIVAL BRIEFINGS

Staggered briefings would make it easier for workers to absorb large volumes of information.

RECOMMENDATION 10. COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND TRADE UNIONS

Provide more public support for community organisation and diaspora groups voluntarily assisting PALM workers and increase the visibility of trade unions within the scheme.

