



## Seasonal Worker Programme expansion – Q & A

### Has the number of places available under the programme increased?

Yes – the programme is now ‘uncapped’ – meaning that the Australian Government has removed the annual limit on how many seasonal workers can participate in the programme. Programme take-up will be determined by employers’ unmet demand for labour.

### Has the programme been expanded to other industries?

Yes, the Seasonal Worker Programme has been expanded to the agriculture and accommodation industries in specified locations.

In addition, the Australian Government will be trialling arrangements with other tourism industry sectors and occupations in Northern Australia.

### What parts of the agriculture industry can participate in the programme?

The horticulture, aquaculture, cane and cotton sectors across Australia can all access the programme.

The Australian Government is consulting with industry on identifying other sectors and occupations within the agriculture industry that may benefit from participation in the programme. Once identified, they will be announced on the Seasonal Worker Programme website.

### What work can seasonal workers undertake in the accommodation industry, and in which locations?

Seasonal workers can undertake a range of work in the accommodation sector, including:

- ✓ Bar attendants
- ✓ Baristas
- ✓ Food and beverage attendants/waiters
- ✓ Café workers
- ✓ Garden labourers
- ✓ Housekeepers
- ✓ Kitchen hands
- ✓ Public area cleaners

Employers in the accommodation industry in locations including Western Australia, the Northern Territory, Tropical North Queensland and Kangaroo Island can access the Seasonal Worker Programme. The Australian Government will announce a finalised list of Seasonal Worker Programme eligible locations on the Seasonal Worker Programme website.

### Have cost sharing arrangements changed? (has the amount that the employer and seasonal worker each pay changed)

Yes. The approved employer is still responsible for paying for the entire return international airfare and domestic transfer costs for seasonal workers to and from their work location. However, the approved employer can now recover the amount over \$500 from these transportation costs. For example, if the return international airfare costs \$1200, and the domestic transfers to and from the work location cost \$300, the employer can recover up to \$1000 from the seasonal worker’s pay

over the course of their employment. The employer must be in a position to provide evidence substantiating any money deducted from seasonal workers relating to travel costs.

### **Have the requirements around duration of employment changed?**

Yes. Seasonal workers can be employed for up to six months, and seasonal workers recruited from Kiribati, Nauru or Tuvalu can be employed for up to nine months. The requirement for employers to guarantee a minimum of fourteen weeks has been removed, however, the employer must demonstrate to the Australian Government that seasonal workers will benefit financially from their participation. For all periods of employment, approved employers must guarantee a minimum average of 30 hours' work per week to seasonal workers.

### **Why are seasonal workers from Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu allowed to work for up to nine months?**

Citizens of the small Pacific Islands states of Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu will be able to access up to nine months seasonal work in Australia due to the higher costs of transportation to and from Australia for citizens from these countries.

### **Will additional countries be invited to participate in the Seasonal Worker Programme?**

More Pacific island countries will be eligible to access the programme.

### **Has the eligibility criteria for seasonal workers changed?**

No, the eligibility criteria for seasonal workers seeking to participate in the programme has not changed. All seasonal workers must satisfy the following criteria:

- ✓ be of good character
- ✓ be healthy and fit for the work specified
- ✓ be aged over 21 at time of visa application
- ✓ be a citizen of the participating country and in the participating country at the time of visa application;

- ✓ have a genuine intention to enter Australia for seasonal work and return to the participating country after their employment ceases
- ✓ the partner country must verify that the stated identity of the candidate is their real identity

### **Are there any changes to add-on skills training?**

The Australian Government will undertake a review of add-on skills training arrangements during the 2016 - 17 financial year.

### **Do I still need to test the labour market?**

Yes. The Programme still has an Australian job-seeker first approach, and approved employers need to test the labour market before recruiting seasonal workers.

### **Find out more**

More information about the Seasonal Worker Programme can be found at:

w: [employment.gov.au/seasonal-worker-programme](http://employment.gov.au/seasonal-worker-programme)

e: [seasonalworker@employment.gov.au](mailto:seasonalworker@employment.gov.au)

p: + 61 2 6240 5234

t: @SWPAustralia



## The horticulture sector and the Seasonal Worker Programme

### A seasonal labour solution

Australian employers in the agriculture industry, including the horticulture sector, unable to find enough local Australian workers to meet their seasonal labour needs can access the Seasonal Worker Programme (the SWP).

The SWP provides employers with access to seasonal workers from Pacific island countries and Timor-Leste for up to six months, and up to nine months for workers recruited Kiribati, Nauru or Tuvalu. Seasonal workers can return in following seasons, providing employers with access to a reliable, returning workforce.

Since the commencement of the programme on 1 July 2012, the horticulture sector has proven that a low-skilled labour mobility programme could not only contribute to economic development in the region, but also provide strong benefits to Australian industry including greater labour certainty and increased efficiency.

### What work can seasonal workers undertake in the horticulture sector?

The seasonal worker programme applies to low skilled occupations in the horticulture sector, including picking, packing, thinning and pruning.

### Employment arrangements

Seasonal workers recruited under the programme earn Australian wages and are

subject to Australian employment conditions. In addition to this, employers have a few additional responsibilities – such as contributing to the seasonal worker's airfare to Australia and helping to organise accommodation. For a list of responsibilities, refer to the factsheet on 'Approved Employers'.

### Accessing seasonal workers is easy

Employers in the agriculture industry with unmet demand for labour can either:

- ✓ contact an approved employer who can manage the recruitment of seasonal workers for you and take care of all the administrative arrangements during the seasonal workers' stay; or
- ✓ apply to become an approved employer

To find a current list of approved employers, or to apply to become an approved employer, visit [www.employment.gov.au/seasonal-worker-program](http://www.employment.gov.au/seasonal-worker-program).

### Find out more

More information about the Seasonal Worker Programme can be found at:

w: [employment.gov.au/seasonal-worker-programme](http://employment.gov.au/seasonal-worker-programme) and  
[www.immi.gov.au/Visas/Pages/416-swp.aspx](http://www.immi.gov.au/Visas/Pages/416-swp.aspx):

e: [seasonalworker@employment.gov.au](mailto:seasonalworker@employment.gov.au)

p: + 61 2 6240 5234

t @SWPAustralia



## Approved employers

### Who can employ seasonal workers?

Only organisations approved by the Australian Government can recruit seasonal workers under the Seasonal Worker Programme. These organisations are referred to as 'approved employers'.

### How does an organisation apply to become an approved employer?

Organisations may be interested in becoming an approved employer of seasonal workers to recruit and place workers with their own business (e.g. an orange grower), or they may wish to recruit seasonal workers to place with another business in a labour hire arrangement. All organisations interested in becoming an approved employer should complete an application form on the Seasonal Worker Programme website [www.employment.gov.au/seasonal-worker-programme](http://www.employment.gov.au/seasonal-worker-programme). This form is then assessed by the Department of Employment.

Approved employers enter into agreements with the Department of Employment and the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.

### Who can apply to become an approved employer?

Any organisation can apply to become an approved employer, including labour hire companies and employers in the agriculture

industry and in identified locations in the accommodation industry.

### Approved employer responsibilities

- ✓ Testing the labour market, and trying to recruit local workers before seeking access to seasonal workers.
- ✓ Employing seasonal workers in accordance with Australian workplace legislation
- ✓ Providing briefings to seasonal workers on arrival into Australia and before departing back home
- ✓ Providing seasonal workers a minimum average of 30 hours per week for up to six months or up to nine months for seasonal workers from the microstates of Kiribati, Nauru and Tuvalu
- ✓ Paying for the full cost of each seasonal workers' return international airfare and domestic transfer arrangements up front, and recouping from the combined cost any amount over \$500 from seasonal workers' pay over time
- ✓ Organising accommodation and transport to and from work for each seasonal worker (at the seasonal workers' expense)
- ✓ Reporting to Government
- ✓ Providing pastoral care for workers, including opportunities for recreation and religious observance, a 24 hour contact number, and assisting workers to access services in the local community

### Find out more

More information about the Seasonal Worker Programme can be found at:

w: [employment.gov.au/seasonal-worker-programme](https://employment.gov.au/seasonal-worker-programme) and  
[www.immi.gov.au/Visas/Pages/416-swp.aspx](https://www.immi.gov.au/Visas/Pages/416-swp.aspx)

e: [seasonalworker@employment.gov.au](mailto:seasonalworker@employment.gov.au)

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