



Freedom of Information Request – FA 26/03/01404

Total number of Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme workers assessed as disengaged ¹			
Period	1 July 2023 to 30 November 2025 ²	1 July 2023 to 31 December 2025 ³	1 July 2023 to 31 March 2026 ⁴
	3010	3377	3817

Notes:

1. Source: Department of Home Affairs (internal documents)
2. As at 30 November 2025
3. As at 28 January 2026
4. As at 9 April 2026

Caveats:

- *This information is provided for the specific purpose of this request.*
- *Disengagement data is drawn from a dynamic system environment. This information is correct at the time of publication and figures may differ slightly from previous or future reporting.*
- *There may be a delay between when the disengagement occurs and when the Approved Employer advises the Department. Disengagements reported are backdated to the actual date of disengagement and this may cause data to fluctuate between reports.*
- *Disengagements are likely to be under reported based on Approved Employer lack of reporting and the true rate may be far higher.*

BACK POCKET BRIEF

Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Budget Estimates Hearing – May 2023

BACK POCKET BRIEF

Topic: Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme

Group: Immigration Group

Division: Immigration Programs Division

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Key Points

- The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme allows eligible employers to hire workers from nine Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste to fill workforce shortages in Australia when there are not enough local workers available.
 - The employer must be approved by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) to participate in the PALM scheme.
 - The role of the Department is to assess applications from Australian employers for a Temporary Activities Sponsorship and visa applications from workers.

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Clearing Officer: Karin Maier, a/g FAS Immigration Programs Division

SB23-000469

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As at 5 MAY 2023

- Under the PALM scheme, there are two cohorts of workers:
 - seasonal workers, who can work in placements up to 9 months and can access a multi-year visa to return to Australia for up to 9 months each year for 4 years.
 - long-term workers, who can work in placements of 1 to 4 years duration.
- As at 31 March 2023, there were **27,887** combined SWP, PLS and PALM (subclass 403) visa holders in Australia.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

If asked: Has there been an increase of PALM workers disengaging from the scheme?

- Caseload integrity report indicates that the number of visa holders leaving their employer without permission (disengaged workers) as a proportion of the program are low:

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

- In 2022-23 to 31 March 2023), the number of disengaged workers reported was 1,438 (combined subclass 403 SWP/PLS/PALM streams).
- The impact of COVID-19 is likely to have been a key driver in increased disengagement rates, given competition amongst employers for labour coupled with misinformation driven by onshore facilitators. This was further exacerbated by the length of time some workers were in Australia without the opportunity to return home because of border closures in the Pacific.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Back Pocket Brief Number: IG-02

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Consultation

- The Chief Statistician has cleared the statistics contained within this brief.
- Skilled Policy Projects, Skilled Visas Branch.
- Refugee, Humanitarian and Settlement Services Division
- Status Resolution Visa Cancellation Division

Statistics Date Ranges – 2023 May Budget Estimates

Since last hearing	1 January 2023 – 31 March 2023
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Financial Year	1 July 2022 – 31 March 2023
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BACK POCKET BRIEF

**Home Affairs Portfolio
Department of Home Affairs
Additional Estimates Hearing – February 2024**

BACK POCKET BRIEF

Topic: Pacific Australia Labour Scheme

Group: Immigration Group

Division: Immigration Programs Division

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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under the Freedom of Information Act 1982

Key Points

- The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme allows eligible employers to hire workers from nine Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste to fill workforce shortages in Australia when there are not enough local workers available.
 - The employer must be approved by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) to participate in the PALM scheme.
 - The role of the Department is to assess applications from Australian employers for a Temporary Activities Sponsorship and visa applications from workers.
- Under the PALM scheme, there are two groups of workers:
 - seasonal workers, who can work in placements up to 9 months and can access a multi-year visa to return to Australia for up to 9 months each year for 4 years.
 - long-term workers, who can work in placements of 1 to 4 years duration.
- As at 31 December 2023, there were 27,605 combined SWP, PLS and PALM (subclass 403) visa holders in Australia, an increase of 14.9 percent compared to 24,021 on 31 December 2022.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

If asked: Has there been an increase of PALM workers disengaging from the scheme?

- The number of visa holders leaving their employer without permission (disengaged workers) as a proportion of the program are as follows:
 - s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
 - s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
 - In 2022-23, of the 29,657 workers in Australia, 1,995 were reported as disengaged.
 - In 2023-24 to 31 December 2023, of the 27,605 workers in Australia, 419 were reported as disengaged
- The impact of COVID-19 is likely to have been a key driver in increased disengagement rates, given competition amongst employers for labour coupled with misinformation driven by onshore facilitators. s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

PALM Scheme Worker Disengagement

- s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

- Home Affairs reporting indicates that the rate of disengaged workers is low. The scale of worker disengagement needs to be considered in the context of the program scale and growth overall.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Worker disengagement

- A worker is deemed to have 'disengaged' when their Approved Employer has reported to Home Affairs that they have left their employment with little/no notice, prior to completing their period of employment.
- PALM guidelines require Approved Employers to report disengaged workers to Home Affairs and DEWR.
- Home Affairs is the lead agency for worker disengagement reporting.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Why workers disengage

- Workers disengage for many reasons, including low hours, perceived poor treatment from their employer, personal motivations (e.g. relationships), employer non-compliance and misinformation provided to workers regarding visa options (including work rights and visa pathways).

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

The date the rate table is recorded as being a changed will be the date of effect of the corresponding "Correction before" event in CSE against their application. There may be a delay between when the change was made and when the Agreed Employer advises the Department (and the event is manually recorded in CSE) and due to backdating of the event this may cause data to fluctuate between reports.

Disagreements are likely to be under reported based on Agreed Employer lack of reporting and the true rate may be higher.

The Department only is included as a respondent to the results for Disagreements as the Department is recorded as the respondent.

Downloaded from <http://ajphaphysoc.org/> on September 11, 2012

Disseminated PNM due to histiocyte infection	1/134
PNM due to histiocyte infection	27/250
Resections	4/130

Note: These figures are based on results from individual studies and do not include clients who have discontinued life buildings who allow access to FM data. Check with FM data for completeness of numbers and more from collection of information to the FM system.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Talking Points:

- It is important to understand that the data used to report disengagement is drawn from a dynamic environment. As a result, figures may vary slightly from what may have been previously reported or will be reported in the future.
- Approved Employers are required to notify both DEWR and the Department when a PALM worker leaves their employment without notice. It is our experience that disengagements are likely to be under-reported.
- Based on the Department's sampling of Approved Employer reporting of worker disengagement to the Department, approximately 177 Approved Employers have not reported any worker disengagement.
- With those caveats: data shows the number of PALM workers reported as leaving their approved employer without permission (disengaged workers) fell from **2,284** in 2022-23 to **1,719** in 2023-24.
- Reported disengagement data for the program year 2024-25 to 31 January 2025 is still being analysed and available data is considered as under reported at this stage.* Worker disengagement is likely to be under reported based on Approved Employers' lack of reporting and the true figures are likely to be higher.
- Approved Employers are required to notify both DEWR and the Department when a PALM worker leaves their employment without notice.

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Background:

- Workers disengage from the PALM scheme for a range of reasons.
- Feedback from workers, community groups, employers and Pacific governments suggests PALM scheme workers leave their employer sponsors for a range of reasons:
 - They may disengage due to feeling disrespected by their employer, due to insufficient work hours or because they do not fully understand their entitlements and responsibilities as PALM scheme workers.
 - Many are targeted by illegal facilitators with promises of higher, tax-free pay.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)



Official

Meeting Brief on PALM SEC

Meeting Date: 5 May 2025

Meeting Time: 3pm – 4pm

Venue: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Meeting: Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Senior Executive Committee (PALM SEC) to be hosted by DEWR

Purpose of the meeting

The meeting invitation advises that the focus will be “PALM scheme worker disengagement s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

PALM Scheme Risks and Integrity Data

Program Year	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	Home Affairs Assessed Disengagements #1	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
2022-23		2295	
2023-24		1724	
2024-31 March 25		689	
Total		4708	

#1: Visa holder leaves their workplace without a prior arrangement with their employer.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Note: The disengagement figures related to ‘employer reported disengagements’. A large number of employers have not reported disengagements, so the figure is purely indicative and should not be used publicly. These figures only serve as an internal integrity indicator.

Key Points

- The Department is looking forward to the next steps on the PALM Disengagement Taskforce report and will work with other stakeholders to progress agreed recommendations.
- Overall, reported disengagement numbers is trending downward in the last two program years but it may be too early to know for sure.
 - The result is not uniform - while some countries are trending downward, others are trending upward
- There is keen public and stakeholder interest in PALM disengagement data. Often the data is misunderstood or misrepresented in the media.
 - The Department is currently working on improving the collection, analysis and dissemination of disengagement data.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)



Australian Government
Department of Employment
and Workplace Relations

PALM scheme disengagement taskforce report

July 2025



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Acknowledgment of country

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations acknowledges the traditional owners of Country throughout Australia on which we gather, live, work and stand. We acknowledge all traditional custodians, their Elders past and present, and we pay our respects to their continuing connection to their culture, community, land, sea and water.

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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Acronyms

ABARES Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences

ABF Australian Border Force

CLO Country Liaison Officer

DAFF Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

DEWR Department of Employment and Workplace Relations

DFAT Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

FWO Fair Work Ombudsman

HOM Head of Mission

LSU Labour Sending Unit

PALM Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme

PDB Pre-departure briefing

PEV Pacific Engagement Visa

PLMSP Pacific Labour Mobility Support Program

PV Protection visa

SWP Seasonal worker program

TAS Temporary activities sponsorship

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UPIA Unlawful providers of immigration assistance

WHM Working holiday maker

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Executive summary

The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme is central to the Australian Government's commitment to meet national labour needs, while simultaneously forging stronger links with participating Pacific island countries and Timor-Leste.

Sustained PALM scheme worker disengagement will threaten the viability of the scheme; this is particularly concerning from the perspective of worker welfare, wellbeing and safety. Once a PALM scheme worker becomes disengaged, they are no longer able to access the protections of the scheme, often leaving them at risk of exploitation.

The number of workers disengaging increased as the scheme grew significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic. s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Key themes of stakeholder feedback included:

- **Visa issues**

Stakeholders raised that the misalignment between employment placement and visa length, the work rights available to applicants with protection visas, and partner country domestic policies that may inhibit workers taking up another PALM scheme placement, contribute to disengagement.

- **Workers**

Workers leave their home country motivated to increase their earnings to improve their quality of life, and that of their families and broader communities. When this aspiration is unfulfilled, or they are promised a greater opportunity elsewhere, it may motivate some to disengage to maximise their income.

- **Employers**

Stakeholders noted that PALM scheme employers play a pivotal role in the success of a worker's placement through selection, recruitment and ongoing support. Unscrupulous conduct by some PALM scheme employers and employers operating outside the scheme is also considered a key pull factor for disengagement.

- **Cultural and social factors**

Cultural differences, misinformation and the influence of some Pasifika diaspora are significant factors that may contribute to disengagement. The degree of cultural competency of PALM scheme stakeholders is also influential.

- **Program operating policies**

Stakeholders suggested that insufficient pre-departure briefings, and workers' lack of awareness of the grievance process, hindered the government's ability to address disengagement. The perceived difficulty for a worker to change employers was also raised.

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Overview of disengagement

PALM scheme workers are employed under a sponsorship arrangement by a PALM scheme employer. For employers to participate in the PALM scheme they must become an Approved Employer (through DEWR) and be a Temporary Activities Sponsor (through Home Affairs) to sponsor PALM workers.

In general terms, disengagement is defined as when a PALM scheme worker stops working for the employer that sponsored them for their visa and continues to remain in, or returns to, Australia outside an approved PALM scheme recruitment.

For statistical purposes, a PALM scheme worker is considered to have disengaged when the worker leaves their sponsored employment, without permission, while on a PALM visa and they are reported to Home Affairs as disengaged by their PALM scheme employer. This definition guides how Home Affairs collect and report data for disengagement.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Reporting disengagement

Disengagement data is dependent on employers reporting the unplanned departure of the worker from the employer's workplace. s. 47E(b)

s. 47E(b)

The increase to the overall worker numbers for PALM during the pandemic occurred concurrently with limited options for alternative labour and was matched by an increase in employer reported disengagement within the PALM scheme. Since the 2023-2024 financial year, newly employer reported disengagement can be observed to have declined (see Figure 7). s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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Table 1: PALM scheme employer reported disengagements by financial year, 2019-20 to 2024-25

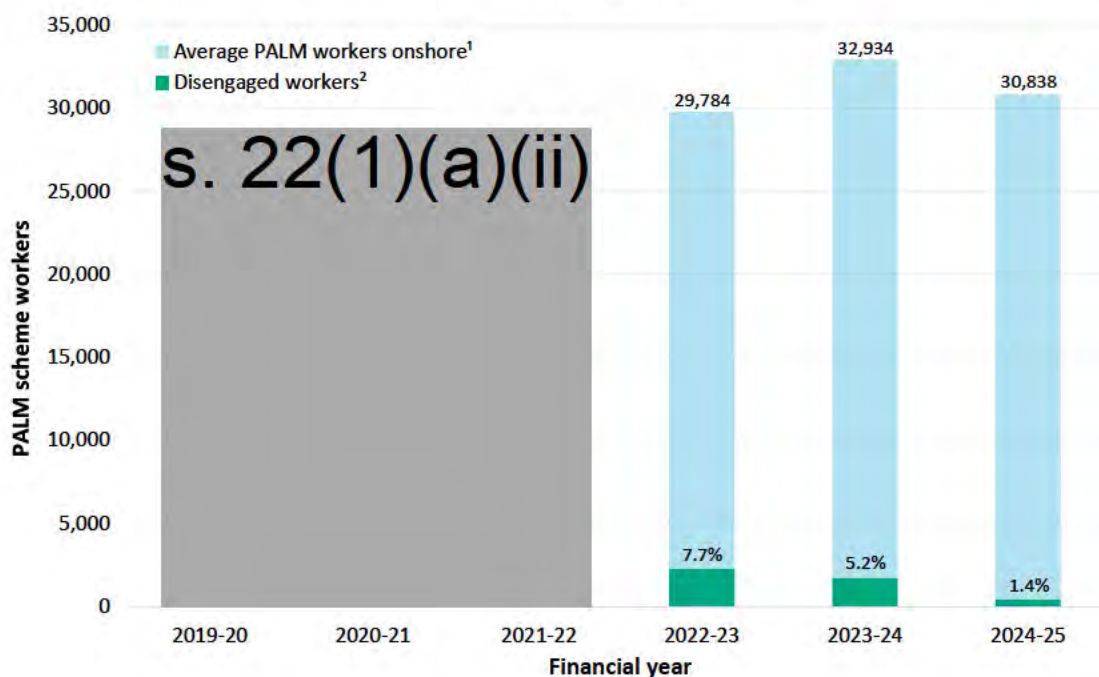
Financial year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Disengaged workers ²	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	2,285	1,723	439
Proportion of workers disengaged*	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Sources: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii) Department of Home Affairs for disengaged workers.

*Percentages rounded to the closest whole number

Figure 7: PALM scheme employer reported disengagements of PALM scheme workers by financial year, 2019-20 to 2024-25



Sources: Department of Employment and Workplace Relations for average PALM scheme workers onshore for selected years, and Department of Home Affairs for disengaged workers.

¹ Average PALM scheme workers onshore counts use a range of methodologies and comparisons should be made with caution: 2019-20 and 2020-21 use historic worker counts. 2021-22 is based on revised April 2022 worker counts. 2022-23 uses an average of worker visa data. 2024-25 uses data to May 2025 for the total worker count.

² Disengaged worker counts are drawn from a dynamic environment and may vary over time. Counts are an approximation based on the year disengagement was reported. Disengagement is not always reported in the same year the worker's visa was granted and may be underreported by employers. Data for 2024-25 counts disengaged workers up to February 2025 only.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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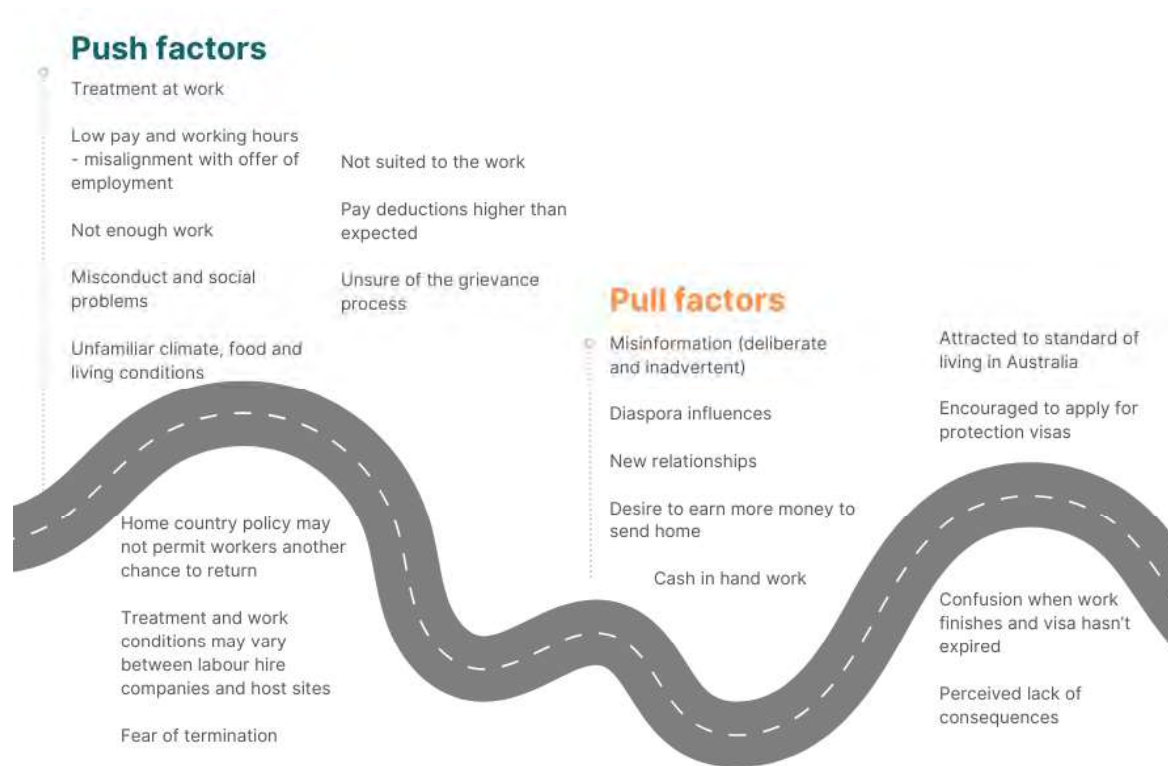
2 Stakeholder insights

Drivers of disengagement

The drivers of disengagement are a nuanced and complex mix of economic, social and program specific circumstances.

Most PALM scheme workers arrive with strong motivation for achieving life-changing goals such as building a house, buying a vehicle or starting a small business at home. Many workers who disengage from the PALM scheme cite failure to meet their financial goals as a significant contributor. The push and pull factors that underpin the drivers of disengagement are outlined in Figure 9:

Figure 9: Stakeholder perceived drivers of disengagement



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s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Stakeholder insights have informed the Taskforce's recommendations and have been consolidated into the following key themes that are perceived to underpin disengagement.

Visa issues

Visa settings – It is not uncommon for a PALM scheme worker's employment contract to end prior to their visa expiration. In these cases, PALM scheme workers sometimes choose to stay in Australia and continue working. Before the introduction of the PALM scheme visa stream and more flexible program settings that supported worker portability, visa durations were directly aligned to the length of the offer of employment. A key stakeholder recommendation was to realign visas with employment tenure.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Perceived lack of consequence – Many stakeholders expressed the concern that there appears to be no consequences for PALM scheme workers who disengage, and subsequently no deterrent, and were unaware of the increased visa cancellation activity of this cohort by Home Affairs and the Australian Border Force.

Partner country domestic policy – A worker may be motivated to disengage if their country prioritises equitable access to the scheme and does not allow workers to return multiple times or they ban workers from participating if a family member has disengaged.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Financial situation of workers

Cash opportunities – Many reported that workers are enticed by cash-in-hand opportunities offered by employers outside of the PALM scheme. This income may be tax and deduction free and combined with a desire (or pressure from family) to remit money home, cash-in-hand work can seem like an attractive option to increase income.

Deductions – Many cited the high deductions (and perceived low net income) particularly at the start of a worker's placement as a driver of disengagement. By disengaging, a worker avoids repaying up-front costs of participating in the PALM scheme including flights and visa costs as well as the ongoing deductions of health insurance, accommodation and transport which some perceive as poor value.

Cost of living – Many said that the cost of living in Australia is too high for workers or was higher than expected. Often the expectations of earnings workers had are not being met and the benefits are reduced via cost of living, so that workers are sending home less money than they anticipated.

Work hours – The PALM scheme deed and guidelines were amended to establish minimum hours from 2023. However, some

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stakeholders still perceived low hours as a driver of disengagement. This was particularly so for short-term workers who can experience more variability in their hours of work. The offer of higher hours outside of the scheme was considered to be a significant pull factor of disengagement.

Accommodation and transport – Some reported overcrowded, poor quality or perceived poor value accommodation as a driver of disengagement. In some cases, PALM scheme workers thought the cost of transport was too high and unfairly required to be paid even when work hours were low.

Employment

Labour hire providers – Many stakeholders believed that the welfare and wellbeing of workers was overlooked at host employer sites (where the PALM scheme employer is a labour hire provider). The perception was that they are more likely to treat workers as a resource rather than an employee as they are usually removed from the day-to-day operations at the worksite.

Treatment of PALM scheme workers – Some stressed that a PALM scheme employer's lack of support for workers plays a major role in disengagement. There is also a perception that there are limited consequences for PALM scheme employers' non-compliance with their PALM scheme deed and guideline obligations.

Recruitment – Some said that PALM scheme employers who do not recruit face-to-face and in country are not successfully matching workers to the most suitable roles. Failure to recruit in country means that they miss the early opportunity to build a relationship with the worker. It then takes longer to build rapport after commencement. Similarly, if a PALM scheme worker's physical abilities do not suit the role, it may affect their performance and ability to maximise earnings.

False promises – Some mentioned that unscrupulous non-PALM scheme employers and unregulated labour hire providers entice workers away from the scheme with (often false) promises of higher pay or better conditions.

Absenteeism – Some raised that worker absenteeism is a major warning sign of disengagement as it may be an indicator of relationship breakdown

Termination – Some said that if a PALM scheme worker's contract is terminated early, they have very little time left in Australia to organise their affairs (such as bank accounts and superannuation) in the allocated time before they must return home. In cases such as these, if the worker felt their termination was unfair, they may also choose to stay longer and seek other work outside of the PALM scheme.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Employment prospects in home country – Some stakeholders noted that wages are lower, and employment opportunities may be fewer in workers' home countries.

Cultural and social factors

Living differences – Some said that workers coming to Australia do not realise how large the country is, and how far away they are from friends and family. The weather may be too hot or too cold (including workplace climate conditions) and food and living conditions may be too different for workers to adapt to.

Some shared the concern that workers in remote areas have limited services such as poor internet connectivity, making it harder to stay in touch with family. Remote areas may also lack easy access to shops, churches or other facilities sufficient to support community integration, particularly those which are aligned with Pasifika values.

Cultural competency – Many shared that all PALM scheme stakeholders need to be culturally competent to allow for a mutual understanding between PALM scheme workers and employers, especially supervisors and others in the workplace.

Misinformation – Many said that members of the local community, diaspora or family and friends, despite some having good intentions, may provide false information to workers which drives them to apply for PVs, disengage, pursue other employment opportunities or simply stay in Australia.

Relationships – Many raised that relationships act as a strong driver of disengagement. Workers with family in Australia or those who form new relationships often have a strong desire to maintain these relationships and remain in Australia. The threat of gender-based violence can contribute to disengagement. This can occur when a worker is under threat from a partner in Australia that prevents them from leaving or is fearful of returning to a violent relationship in their home country.

**Names have been changed for confidentiality purposes.*

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Pregnancy – Many shared concerns for pregnant disengaged workers in accessing pre- and post-natal services and for the mother and child's welfare as disengaged workers are highly unlikely to maintain private health insurance. Avoiding the intense stigma of returning home with a child born out of wedlock was also associated with driving female workers to disengage. Often, the general risks associated with disengagement are compounded in these cases, resulting in higher vulnerability for these women and their children.

Raising a grievance – Some stakeholders noted that workers are not likely to raise a grievance. Workers from the Pacific and Timor-Leste may face multiple barriers to do so due to differing cultural norms, language and literacy difficulties and a general mistrust of government and other officials. Often this is a worker's only chance to work in Australia due to the high demand and competition for participation in the program in their country so some workers will accept any role for the opportunity. For other workers this may also be their first time in formal employment. As a result, some workers worry that any indication of discontent will result in termination.

Program settings

Lack of mobility – Stakeholders shared that the limited ability for PALM scheme workers to change employers within the scheme can lead to disengagement. The PALM visa has provisions that allow a worker to change employer (with DEWR's assistance) and remain in compliance with their visa conditions. However, stakeholders perceived that there are too few options for a worker if they are not satisfied with their PALM scheme employer who sponsors their visa. Stakeholders suggested that this power imbalance can lead to a risk of exploitation.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Grievance process – Some stakeholders noted that workers may choose to disengage if grievances are not addressed in a timely manner, or they feel they are not satisfactorily resolved. This is compounded by cultural and other contextual matters

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

From: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
Subject: FYI: RE: meeting : PALM scheme discussion[SEC=OFFICIAL]
Date: Wednesday, 27 August 2025 3:14:21 PM
Attachments: [image002.jpg](#)
[image003.png](#)
[image004.jpg](#)

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From: Skilled and Temporary Visa Policy Support s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 27 August 2025 3:12 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au>
Cc: Skilled and Temporary Visa Policy Support s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au>
Subject: FW: RE: meeting : PALM scheme discussion[SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Ask and you shall receive

s. 22(1)

OFFICIAL

From: Brett WHITE s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au>
Sent: Wednesday, 27 August 2025 3:05 PM
To: s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@HOMEAFFAIRS.GOV.AU>; Karin MAIER
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au>
Cc: DLO.Burke s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au>; MO Registration
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au>; MCHP Executive Support
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au>; Skilled and Temporary Visa Policy Support
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au>; Michael WILLARD s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au>;
Tiali GOODCHILD s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@HOMEAFFAIRS.GOV.AU>; FAS Skilled and Temporary Visa
and Capability <s. 22(1)(a)(ii)@homeaffairs.gov.au>
Subject: CM: RE: meeting : PALM scheme discussion[SEC=OFFICIAL]

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Hi s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Please find below some points on PALM to support your meeting with s. 47F(1)/Welcoming Australia team, with a focus on disengagement noting your advice on issues likely to be raised.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Disengagement:

- PALM scheme worker disengagement is a priority for the government.
- Data shows the number of employer-reported disengaged workers are falling
 - According to data from Home Affairs, the disengagement rate has declined in the last two program years. [to ~5 per cent in 2023-24].
 - Disengagement data is based on employer reporting.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Worker disengagements

- Workforce shortages in rural Australia and the terrible disruption to Pacific economies caused by COVID-19 were drivers for worker disengagements from the program.
- Many of the changes to the scheme, including new minimum hour and minimum net pay requirements, directly address some of the key drivers of disengagement – insufficient hours and not enough pay.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Kind regards

Brett

Brett White (he/him)

Assistant Secretary Immigration Engagement, Pacific & Major Events

Skilled & Temporary Visa & Capability Division

Immigration Programs Group

Department of Home Affairs

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Sent: Wednesday, 27 August 2025 12:58 PM

Disengagement taskforce report

Talking points - attributable to the department

- The wellbeing and welfare of PALM scheme workers in Australia is of central importance to the Australian Government and its Pacific and Timor-Leste partners.
- PALM scheme worker disengagement is a priority for the Australian Government, and an Interdepartmental Disengagement Taskforce was established to identify strategies to better prevent, deter, detect and respond to disengagement.
 - Taskforce members include the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Home Affairs and the Australian Border Force, the Fair Work Ombudsman, and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.
- The Interdepartmental Taskforce identified and agreed on 6 high-level recommendations to address previous, current and future disengagement. A summary of the recommendations provides an account of the key findings and is available on the [PALM scheme website](#).
- A disengagement response team within DEWR has begun work to implement the recommendations.
- Workers who have disengaged from the PALM scheme no longer have access to the protections of the program and can be vulnerable to exploitation.
- Workers who have left the PALM scheme are encouraged to contact DEWR to discuss what options are available to them. Those options (including re-engagement) will vary depending on how long someone has been disengaged from the scheme.
- Disengaged workers seeking to re-engage in the PALM scheme are encouraged to call the PALM scheme support service line on (1800 51 51 31) for assistance and contact their [country liaison officer](#) for guidance.

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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PALM worker disengagement

- A PALM scheme worker is considered to have disengaged when the worker leaves their sponsored employment, without permission, while on a PALM visa and they are reported to Home Affairs as disengaged by their PALM scheme employer.
 - Home Affairs is the lead agency for worker disengagement statistical reporting.
- Workers may disengage for many reasons including low hours, perceived poor treatment from their employer, personal motivations (e.g. relationships), being encouraged to move to another employer for better pay, and misinformation from other people about their work rights and visa pathways.
- Workers who have disengaged from the PALM scheme no longer have access to the protections of the program and can be vulnerable to exploitation.
- The number of PALM scheme workers disengaging increased as the scheme grew significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The PALM scheme Approved Employer Deed and Guidelines require PALM scheme employers to report disengaged workers to both the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and Home Affairs.
- The disengagement rate has declined, from 10% in 2020-21 to 3% in 2024-25 (refer below table).

PALM scheme worker disengagement rates							
Financial year	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26 (up to 30 Nov 25)
Disengaged workers	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)				1,715	1,018	277
Proportion of workers disengaged	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)						

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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Caseload Risk and Integrity Capability - Monthly PALM Integrity Report (December 2025)

The data shown in this report is current as at 2026-01-28

NOTE: Due to Home Affairs reporting issues data on Refused Immigration Clearances (RICs) is currently unavailable.

About this report

This report provides statistics on adverse outcomes (see Table 0.1 on the 'Definitions' sheet for descriptions of key indicators) for each of the following streams under the Temporary Work (International Relations) visa (subclass 403):

- Seasonal Workers Programme (SWP)
- Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS)
- Pacific Australia Mobility (PALM) Scheme

In April 2022, the SWP and PLS streams were consolidated and replaced by the PALM scheme, with the latter only accepting new applications. The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) are responsible for administering the PALM Scheme with the support of the managing contractor, the Pacific Labour Facility (PLF).

PALM Scheme workers can work in Australia under a short-term contract for seasonal work (up to nine months), or a long-term contract (between one and four years) for non-seasonal work. Employers and workers must be endorsed by DEWR and DFAT in order to participate in the PALM Scheme.

Data sources and parameters

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Data is drawn from a dynamic system environment, this information is correct at the time of publication and figures may differ slightly from previous or future reporting. Data is cleared for external use for the purpose of distribution to:

- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR)
- Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment
- Ministers of relevant portfolios

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Caseload Risk and Integrity Capability - PALM Integrity Report Key Definitions and Context

Definitions of adverse outcomes (key indicators) that feature in this report

Adverse Outcome	Description	Context
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)		
Home Affairs Assessed Disengagement	The visa holder leaves their workplace without a prior arrangement with their employer. This may include events that are reported to Home Affairs by the employer (see Table 2) which are then assessed by Pacific Visa & WIM Program Management Section within Home Affairs to determine if a genuine disengagement has occurred. Note that this event is very similar to the "Employer Reported Disengagement" events but involves manual assessment to ensure that the event has been correctly recorded by the Approved Employer (AE). This data reflects Approved Employers reporting worker disengagements via email containing details of multiple workers, and also includes Notification of Sponsorship Changes (NOSC) form notifications data.	The date the visa holder is recorded as being a disengaged worker is the date of effect of the corresponding "Cancellation Referral" event in ICSE against their application. There may be a delay between when the disengagement occurs and when the Approved Employer advises the Department (and the event is manually recorded in ICSE) and due to backdating of the event this may cause data to fluctuate between reports.
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)		

Employer Reported Event	Description	Context
Employer Reported Disengagement	The visa holder leaves their workplace without a prior arrangement with their employer. Note that this event is very similar to the "Home Affairs assessed disengagement" event. The "Employer reported disengagement" event is a result of an automated process involving an employer reporting a single incident using a NOSC form in ImmAccount. Further assessment by Home Affairs may confirm the employer report event as a genuine disengagement, which would then be reported as a "Home Affairs assessed disengagement" in the adverse outcomes described in Table 1.	The date the visa holder is recorded as having absconded is the date of effect of the corresponding "Absconded Employment - Potential Breach of 8611" event appears in ICSE against their application as a result of a NOSC form being submitted via ImmAccount. There may be a delay between when the disengagement occurs and when the Approved Employer advises the Department (and the absconder event appears in ICSE). Subsequently, a Cancellation Referral event is then manually entered in ICSE, which may be delayed up to a few days. The visa holder will be counted as a "disengaged worker" at this stage (see above).
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)		

Caseload Risk and Integrity Capability - PALM Integrity Report
Page 1: Adverse Outcomes and Employer Self-Reported Events by Program Year

Table 1.1: Adverse outcomes for the current and previous two program years (all streams combined)

Program Year	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)	Home Affairs Internal Disagreements	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
2023-24		1762	
2024-25		1183	
2025-26		432	
Total		3377	

N/A - Not Available

Table 1.2: Employer self-reported events for the current and previous two program years (all streams combined)

Program Year	Employer Self-Reported Disagreements	s. 22(1)(a)(ii)
2023-24	716	
2024-25	638	
2025-26	348	
Total	1702	

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

2020/06/16/000000

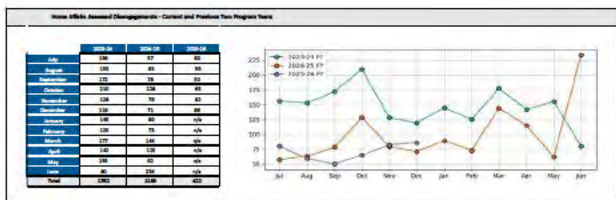
Caseload Risk and Integrity Capability - PALM Integrity Report

Page 2: Longitudinal Comparison of Advance Caseloads and Employer Self-Reported Events

Monthly Advance Caseloads: 2019-24
Home Office Advance Caseloads: 2019-24

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)



s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

Monthly Employer Self-Reported Events (Employers: Reported Change/Events, Current Week, Did not Continue Work)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)



s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

PALM SCG - DEWR Data

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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Tables for external use

Table 1: Employer Reported Disengagement from the PALM Scheme

Source: Home Affairs

Overall, the numbers are trending downward. However, it is too early to determine how disengagements for the remainder of the program year will track, as there is often a delay in employers submitting disengagement notifications. Some disengagements for this program year may not appear in the data until reports are run in the following program year.

Disengagements recorded in a particular program year may also relate to workers who were granted visas and arrived in earlier years. For example, disengagements reported in the current program year may relate to workers who arrived between 2022 and 2024, but are only reflected in the current year's data. As a result, calculating a meaningful disengagement rate is difficult and can be misleading.

Program Year	Employer Report Disengagements
2023-24	1762
2024-25	1193
2025-26	422
Total	3377

Caveats:

- This data is not for public release.
- The data is drawn from a live environment, which is continuously updated. The information is correct at the time of publication and figures may differ from previous or future reporting.
- The data is subject to revision and may differ from previous or future reporting, as it is based on information taken from live systems,.
- Approved Employers are required to notify both DEWR and Home Affairs when a PALM worker leaves their employment without notice.
- Approved Employers have 28 days to notify the Department of disengagements, which are crossed checked with DEWR, resulting in delays in data reporting.

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Caseload Risk and Integrity Capability - Monthly PALM Integrity Report (March 2026)

The data shown in this report is current as at 2026-04-09

About this report

This report provides statistics on adverse outcomes (see Table 0.1 on the 'Definitions' sheet for descriptions of key indicators) for each of the following streams under the Temporary Work (International Relations) visa (subclass 403):

- Seasonal Workers Programme (SWP)
- Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS)
- Pacific Australia Mobility (PALM) Scheme

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PALM Scheme workers can work in Australia under a short-term contract for seasonal work (up to nine months), or a long-term contract (between one and four years) for non-seasonal work. Employers and workers must be endorsed by DEWR and DFAT in order to participate in the PALM Scheme.

Data sources and parameters

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Key Definitions and Concepts

Definitions of adverse outcomes (key indicators) that feature in this report

Adverse Outcome	Description	Concepts
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)		
Home Affairs Assessed Disengagement	The visa holder leaves their workplace without a prior arrangement with their employer. This may include events that are reported to Home Affairs by the employer (see Table 2) which are then assessed by PAWS within Home Affairs to determine if a genuine disengagement has occurred. Note that this event is very similar to the "Disengagement - employer notified" events but involves manual assessment to ensure that the event has been correctly recorded by the Approved Employer (AE).	The date the visa holder is recorded as being a disengaged worker is the date of effect of the corresponding "Cancellation Referral" event in ICSE against their application. There may be a delay between when the disengagement occurs and when the Approved Employer advises the Department (and the event is manually recorded in ICSE) and due to backdating of the event this may cause data to fluctuate between reports.
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)		

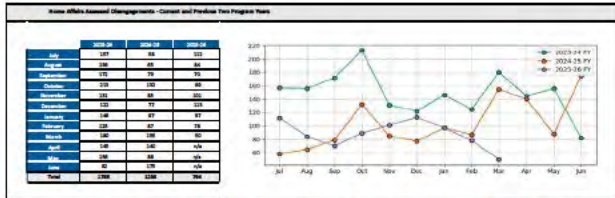
Employer Notified Event	Description	Concepts
Employer Reported Disengagement	The visa holder leaves their workplace without a prior arrangement with their employer. Note that this event is very similar to the "Home Affairs assessed disengagement" event. The "Employer reported disengagement" event is a result of an automated process involving an employer reporting the incident using a form in Introspectrum. Further assessment by Home Affairs may confirm the employer report event as a genuine disengagement, which would then be reported as a "Home Affairs assessed disengagement" in the adverse outcomes described in Table 1.	The date the visa holder is recorded as having absconded is the date of effect of the corresponding "Absconded Employment - Potential Breach of 8611" event appears in ICSE against their application as a result of a NOSC form being submitted via Introspectrum. There may be a delay between when the disengagement occurs and when the Approved Employer advises the Department (and the absconder event appears in ICSE). Subsequently, a Cancellation Referral event is then manually entered in ICSE, which may be delayed up to a few days. The visa holder will be counted as a "disengaged worker" at this stage (see above).
s. 22(1)(a)(ii)		

Caseload Risk and Integrity Capability - PALM Integrity Report
Page 2 Longitudinal Comparison of Adverse Outcomes and Integrity Self-Reported Events

Monthly Adverse Outcomes - Home Affairs Integrity Capabilities

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)



s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

s. 22(1)(a)(ii)



s. 22(1)(a)(ii)

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