

Early childhood education and care pilot



The Australian Government is implementing a small Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme early childhood education and care (ECEC) pilot to test the viability of employing PALM scheme workers in Australia's ECEC sector.

Participants

The pilot program has commenced with a small number of PALM scheme workers from Papua New Guinea (PNG).

Locations

The pilot participants will be employed by 2 PALM scheme employers. These Australian National Quality Framework approved ECEC services are in Katherine and Alice Springs in the Northern Territory, where local ECEC educators have been hard to find.

Timing

The pilot participants arrived in Australia in February 2025 and will remain for the duration of their employment, up to 4 years under the long-term stream of the PALM scheme.

Employer obligations

ECEC pilot employers must comply with the PALM scheme [Approved Employer Deed of Agreement](#) and PALM scheme [Approved Employer Guidelines](#). This includes undertaking labour market testing assessed by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) to ensure the local workforce cannot fill vacancies.

Qualifications and training

The educators will be placed in the position Early Childhood Educator (431132) at skill level 3 on the [Occupation Standard Classification for Australia](#) (OSCA).

ECEC pilot participants were required to have completed a Certificate III in ECEC accredited by the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority.

ECEC pilot participants hold a Certificate III, delivered in English. English language proficiency has also been assured through employer interviews and a language, literacy and numeracy assessment.

The government is funding additional training for participants, including an Educator Preparation Program and opportunity to obtain a Diploma in ECEC.

Local employment

The government recognises that meeting immediate workforce shortages must be balanced with developing local employment and skills development opportunities and pathways for Australians, including First Nations people, including through DEWR and the National Indigenous Australians Agency's employment and training initiatives.

Safeguarding

A child protection advisor has been engaged to ensure child protection risks are identified and managed. All educators require [working with children](#) and police checks – the same as Australians and other migrant workers taking up the same role.

Evaluation

The government will carefully monitor and evaluate the pilot, with an evaluation 6 months after the arrival of participants.

A decision on opening the PALM scheme more broadly to employers in the ECEC sector will be informed by evidence from the pilot and feedback from PALM scheme stakeholders.

Consultations

Consultation has taken place across government departments and with the Northern Territory Government, unions, employers, industry, and Pacific governments, to ensure all stakeholder interests, including First Nations interests, are considered in the implementation of the pilot.

Any questions on the ECEC pilot can be sent to PALMscheme@dfat.gov.au.