



**Australian High Commission**

**Vanuatu**

Wednesday 5 August 2020

## **NORTHERN TERRITORY PACIFIC LABOUR MOBILITY TRIAL**

Both Australian mango farmers and ni-Vanuatu workers will benefit from a trial resumption of the Pacific Labour Scheme and Seasonal Worker Programme in the Northern Territory.

Up to 170 workers will go to Australia to support the Northern Territory's mango industry under the trial, which is an important first step to restarting the entry of workers under Australia's Pacific labour mobility programmes. The entry of new workers paused due to COVID-19 travel restrictions.

Workers in Vanuatu will be the first to participate in the trial, based on health considerations and industry demand.

Important health measures, including 14 days' quarantine, will apply to protect the health of both the communities in the Northern Territory and the workers.

In recent years, nearly half of the Northern Territory mango seasonal workforce has been made up of Pacific and Timorese workers, many of whom return each season to support Northern Territory mango growers. Their experience is highly valued.

Commissioner of Labour, Murielle Meltenoven, said the pilot project was a great opportunity for ni-Vanuatu citizens especially during this challenging time of COVID-19 in which people have lost their employment in Vanuatu.

"This is a great opportunity for the people of Vanuatu and we don't want to miss this golden opportunity. We thank the Government of Australia for choosing Vanuatu to be part of this pilot project and we are looking for a fruitful outcome of the trial, which will be carried out very soon," she said.

The Commissioner added that "In preparing the mobilisation of workers to be part of the pilot program, the Department of Labour wishes to reaffirm its position that the welfare of our seasonal workers taking part in this pilot project will remain the most important priority for the two countries to address. We will work closely with our mission in Canberra, the Australian Government, recruiting agents and approved employers to address any issues pertaining to this project. We want to reassure our workers that the Vanuatu Government will not force any worker to travel and that decision will remain entirely for them to decide."



## Australian High Commission

### Vanuatu

Wednesday 5 August 2020

Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs, Senator the Hon Marise Payne, said Pacific and Timorese workers have played a critical role in supporting industries across Australia, particularly agriculture.

"Australia has been working closely with our Pacific family during the crisis, and this trial represents a small but significant step towards the broader resumption of entries under the Seasonal Worker Programme and Pacific Labour Scheme," she said.

"Any further steps will be considered carefully and will prioritise the health of communities here in Australia, as well as the Pacific and Timor-Leste."

Australia's Minister for International Development and the Pacific, the Hon Alex Hawke MP, said these would be the first Pacific workers to enter Australia since 20 March 2020.

"The Pacific is facing significant economic disruption due to COVID-19. This trial will provide a welcome boost in remittances to support the economic recovery of our region and will enable more workers to support their families and communities back home."

Pacific Island countries have been very successful in preventing the spread of COVID-19 in our region. The Australian Government looks forward to continuing to partner with our Pacific family through labour mobility programs.



*Minister Alex Hawke meeting Department of Labour officials during his official visit in Vanuatu in 2019*

—END—



**Australian High Commission**  

---

**Vanuatu**

Wednesday 5 August 2020

To know the latest about Australia in Vanuatu please follow us on:  
[Web](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#)