

MIGRATION PATHWAYS

Northern Australia Worker Pilot Program (NAWPP)

Overview

In 2016, the Northern Australia Worker Pilot Program (NAWPP) brought about 80 tourism, hospitality, and elder care workers from Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu to fill shortages in Australia's Northern Territories. The program improved employer productivity, reduced staff turnover, and increased remittances. In 2017, the program was extended and formalized within a new Pacific Labor Scheme (PLS).

Why was it started?

The Northern Territory of Australia, a remote, low-density part of the country, experiences high demand for tourism and hospitality workers. Most businesses report significant staffing shortages and turnover. At the same time, the government of Australia recognized that expanding labor mobility opportunities for skilled workers from Pacific Island countries would improve economic development in the region while contributing to business productivity and growth.

In 2015, the Australian government's White Paper on Developing Northern Australia recommended a new pilot program for workers from Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu. The program aimed to provide up to 250 two-year placements in lower-skilled, nonseasonal industries in Northern Australia.

How does it work?

The project was funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and managed by an external contractor, Palladium. It targeted employers with labor shortages in nonseasonal occupations, including tourism and hospitality, as well as elder care. A microstate pilot visa was created to facilitate the



Country of Destination
AUSTRALIA

Country of Origin
**KIRIBATI, NAURU, AND
TUVALU**

Skill
**TOURISM, HOSPITALITY, AND
ELDER CARE**  

Skill Level
MID-LEVEL

Timeline
2016–17

Beneficiaries
80

Countries all around the world utilize migration pathways to train and bring over workers with needed skills. The CGD Migration Pathways database documents these pathways to promote innovation in this space. To explore the database, visit GSP.cgdev.org.

movement of these workers, the first group of whom arrived in October 2016.

What impact has it had?

Employers in the region, such as the Hayman Island Resort (the first employer to sign on), felt the program provided skilled and enthusiastic workers and reduce overall staff turnover. Many employees earned their Certificate III in Hospitality and sent substantial remittances home.

In September 2017, the pilot was extended and formalized in the form of a new Pacific labor scheme. This employer-sponsored scheme, which commenced in July 2018, sought to bring in 2,000 workers from Kiribati, Nauru, and Tuvalu to staff nonseasonal occupations, with a focus on elder care. Recruitment under the scheme was done under a new Pacific Labor Facility that provided a bridge between the Australian government and interested employers.

Further readings

Australian Government. 2015. *Our north, our future: White Paper on developing Northern Australia*. [https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/June percent202018/document/pdf/nawp-fullreport.pdf?acsf_files_redirect](https://www.industry.gov.au/sites/default/files/June%202018/document/pdf/nawp-fullreport.pdf?acsf_files_redirect)

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Pacific Trade Invest Australia. 2018. “Labour mobility success: A pilot for the Pacific in tropical Australia.” February. <https://pacifictradeinvest.com/explore-our-work/insights/labour-mobility-success>



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