


# HOW DOES BRINGING IN WORKERS UNDER THE PALM SCHEME WORK?

Have you heard about the PALM Scheme that allows you to employ overseas workers for the peak season? Want to know more about the accommodation requirements?

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## What is the PALM Scheme and what do you need to know?

The **PALM Scheme** is an initiative that was introduced to provide overseas workers for a variety of industries including the agricultural and horticultural sectors. Workers are sourced from 9 Pacific Islands as well as Timor-Leste.

These overseas workers help to fill labour gaps during seasonal peaks and can include both short-term and long-term contracts. It's a great initiative for Australian growers and producers to attract much-needed farm labour when there are not enough people available locally.

The scheme also provides a good return on investment and makes great financial sense for growers and producers who struggle to find suitable workers for their operation.

One of the crucial components for eligibility into the PALM Scheme is the need to provide or have access to suitable accommodation for the workers. Essentially, there's no point accessing the scheme if there's nowhere close by for the workers to live.

## What is meant by suitable accommodation?

According to the eligibility requirements found in the [Approved Employer Guidelines PDF](#) (Section 10.2), you need to supply photographs of the accommodation that you're going to provide that accurately represent the current state of the accommodation.

The accommodation must be fully furnished with beds, tables, couches and other suitable furniture. Plus, it must be safe, secure and fit for occupation. It must also comply with any WHS legislation that's applicable to your state or territory. Essentially, this means that if you have an old farm house somewhere on your property that's been neglected, this probably won't be approved without major renovations.



## Minimum standards.

Here's a basic list of the minimum standards needed for your proposed accommodation to be approved. The accommodation must:

- Be in fair condition and offer good value in terms of rental charges.
- Be Fit for purpose and comply with your relevant state or territory legislation in relation to rental properties.
- Not have any outstanding maintenance work that needs to be completed.
- Be clean and in a sanitary condition.
- Be easily accessible, safe and secure.
- Have suitable sleeping quarters.
- Have adequate bathroom facilities including a functioning hot water service.
- Include adequate heating, cooling and ventilation.
- Have adequate cooking and dining facilities and provide all the necessary utensils, crockery etc.
- Include adequate laundry facilities for washing and drying clothes.

- Provide leisure, social and telecommunication facilities.
- Include adequate storage facilities for the worker's belongings and the safe storage of food.

In the case where two or more workers are going to be sharing the same accommodation, there should be locks on the bedrooms and bathrooms to ensure privacy. You'll also need to ensure that each worker has their own lockable storage facility (such as a safe) for valuables such as money, passports and other documentation.

As you can see, the accommodation requirements for overseas workers through the PALM scheme are quite extensive but not unreasonable.

### On farm accommodation is desirable for so many valid reasons.

Ultimately, you want to consider providing on farm accommodation if at all possible as this provides easy accessibility and eliminates the need for providing transport if your workers are staying in town. This is especially important if the nearest town that has suitable accommodation is quite a distance from your property.

After all, providing transport to from their accommodation could be quite costly and may need you to engage a driver and even hire a van or mini bus.

But if you provide on site accommodation, you're going to save on these extra costs and your workers don't have to spend hours in transit daily. This means they'll be far more refreshed and ready to start work early in the morning.

So having your own on farm accommodation makes good sense financially and ultimately gives you a good return on investment when all costs are considered. Once you have your accommodation in place, maintenance costs are virtually non-existent or at least negligible.

You'll also find that it's far safer for your workers to stay on the property and this is good for your overall OH&S strategy to eliminate the risk of worker fatigue. You can learn more about the risks of worker fatigue and how to eliminate them in one of our [recent articles](#).

### What if you don't have any suitable accommodation on your farm?

If you don't currently have any suitable accommodation on your farm and you want to take advantage of the PALM scheme, you could consider investing in one or more modular accommodation units. Modular units are always built in a factory and then transported to your site where they're easily connected to the necessary services.

Purchasing one or more of these units from a reputable modular building company will ensure that they're going to meet the minimum standards required. This means that there's nothing else you need to do to be eligible for the scheme.

New modular accommodation units also come with warranties and guarantees as well as the highest performing insulation and state-of-the-art construction methods. This can effectively reduce the running costs unlike an old farmhouse that might be draughty and even have water leaks that need to constantly be repaired.

You'll also find that these units require very little maintenance, so you can use them to accommodate overseas workers year after year. Essentially, this is a great investment in your business that will continue to provide you with the rewards well into the future.

For example, when you aren't employing overseas workers on your farm, you can use the accommodation units to house family and friends who come to visit or you could even consider opening up an agritourism venture for another source of income.

Plus these modular accommodation units can always be relocated to another farm or even sold off in 5 to 10 years if circumstances change. You can't do that if you're just renovating an old farm house.

In fact, there are many other [benefits to investing in modular accommodation](#) for your farm that you might like to investigate further.

For more information about the accommodation requirements for the PALM Scheme, download our free guide [here](#).



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