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## **New Agriculture Visa would strip safeguards present in routinely exploited Pacific Labour Mobility program**

Migrant workers facing widely reported exploitation under the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme will be at greater risk of abuse and mistreatment under the Morrison Government's new Agriculture Visa, which offers even fewer protections than the PALM scheme.

The new Agriculture Visa has no limits on the number of vulnerable workers employers can bring in, no limit on the list of industries they can work in, no geographic restriction on where in Australia they can work and offers no guaranteed pathway to permanent residency.

The new scheme also has no mechanism for ensuring that workers being brought in are filling genuine workers shortages – meaning that employers have a blank cheque to replace local employees with vulnerable migrant workers.

The Morrison Government is promoting the ability of employers to “share” migrant workers with other employers as a special “feature” of the Agriculture Visa, under an arrangement that treats working people as the property of the employer who sponsors their visa.

### **Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:**

“The fact that the Morrison Government thinks that migrant workers “absconding” is a significant problem says it all – working people should always have the right to withdraw their labour and seek other employment. Signing a visa does not mean you own another person or can control their life.

“The shocking stories of abuse and exploitation that we hear from workers in the PALM program are likely the thin end of the wedge if the Morrison Government presses ahead with the new Agriculture Visa scheme. This would offer even lower standards than the limited protections that working people currently have under the PALM scheme.

“The new visa program is not based on any independent verification of the need for short term visa workers or proof that improved wages, training and conditions for local workers could not fix so-called skill shortages.

“This is yet another example of this Government shredding workers’ rights to appease powerful employers – vulnerable migrant workers should not suffer because the Prime Minister needs to buy off the Nationals before an election.

“The Agriculture Visa program was previously dismissed out of hand by the Prime Minister – he is only reviving it now out of desperation. Working people will suffer to provide him with a measure of political security.”

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