

Approved Employers of Australia: Who are they?

Jane Richter

Founded in 2019, the Approved Employers of Australia (AEA) is an association formed to represent the businesses who participate in the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) and the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS).

The association exists to provide support to its members to inform and educate, and to advocate on their behalf at all levels of government. The sharing of information and experience amongst its members is one of the Associations key strengths.

The Board is comprised of a group of skilled and experienced professionals who are committed to ensuring the best outcomes for all parties that are involved in the current schemes: Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP) and Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS).

Led by Executive Officer Steve Burdette, the AEA Board are passionate about providing a united voice to discuss operational and policy issues with stakeholders including key industry groups in Australia and offshore in the participating Pacific Islands.

They are also a very active voice in lobbying the Commonwealth Government to implement changes and improvements to the schemes.

The AEA is also a member of the PALM and AG Visa Advisory Group as well as the PALM Agricultural Committee, which meets quarterly and provides guidance on the merger and operational governance of the SWP and PLS.

The AEA has a Code of Conduct which outlines its values and the standards which members are obliged to uphold:

CORE VALUES

INTEGRITY
ACCOUNTABILITY
COMMITMENT

STANDARDS

Lead by example by doing what we say we do

Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to benefit the program

Commitment to worker Health, Welfare & Wellbeing as agreed by the Association

emuneration in accordance with relevant Industrial Relations Instrument

Compliance with minimum accommodation and transport standards agreed to by the Association

AEA members agree to be held accountable to meet or exceed the standards set by the Association and to notify the Executive Officer of any AEA member not adhering to our standards

The AEA also has an active role in encouraging members to participate in assurance and compliance schemes that are recognised in the various industry sectors to ensure all members apply the highest ethical employment standards possible.

Examples of these accreditation schemes are:

FAIR FARMS: the industry-led initiative aimed at fostering fair and responsible employment practices in Australian horticulture

Visit fairfarms.com.au



SEDEX: an international standard to support companies to manage responsible sourcing throughout their supply chain and combat modern slavery

Visit sedex.com



Since the restart of the SWP & PLS program in September 2020, the AEA and its members have taken a leading role to get the program underway under extremely challenging circumstances. Each state and territory introduced its own quarantine pathway and systems and processes to bring workers into the country, causing significant confusion and delays.

The AEA entered into a contractual agreement with Agriculture Victoria to assist with labour mobility in 2021/2022. To date 9,000 workers have been brought into Australia since the restart with the majority being SWP workers compared to PLS workers.

The Association has over 50 members, representing most of the large horticultural businesses that have already embraced the benefits of securing workers through either the PLS or SWP. Members enjoy a range of benefits, but the key resource provided is a weekly e-newsletter that provides a real-time, comprehensive update on both programs.

THE AEA WELCOMES NEW APPROVED EMPLOYERS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN JOINING THE ASSOCIATION.

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