



Australian High
Commission Honiara



Ministry of Foreign Affairs
and External Trade

MEDIA RELEASE

26 February 2020

Solomon's first PLS aged care workers for Australia

In a major milestone, Australian an employer has recruited four aged care workers from Solomon Islands through the Pacific Labour Scheme (PLS). The all-female PLS group will undertake roles in Mercy Services residential care facility in Singleton, New South Wales.

Prior to leaving Solomon Islands, the workers participated in a pre-departure training, which included detailed information about worker contracts, and general information about Australian culture, laws and customs.

At the opening of the training on 26 February 2020, Australian High Commissioner, Dr Lachlan Strahan, congratulated the workers. Dr Strahan told the women “this is a historic moment - you will be the first ever Solomon Islanders to work in aged care roles through PLS”.

“Increasing Solomon Islands participation in Australia’s labour mobility programs is a shared priority. I am pleased that Solomon Islands labour mobility has expanded into aged care, which is a priority sector for the Solomon Islands Government”.

“This is a big opportunity – you will have a chance to earn money and bring new skills back to your country. It is also a chance to make new friends in Australia.”

Dr Jimmie Rodgers, Secretary to the Prime Minister, provided opening remarks on behalf of the Solomon Islands Government. Dr Rodger told the group “this morning is a bit of history. This is a new sector for us and we have a competitive advantage. Our Solomon Islands qualities help make you the total carer”.

“You are ambassadors for Solomon Islands and perceptions matter. Whether other employers will recruit from Solomon Islands depends on you. Make all of us proud – your family, your community, your country.

At 25 years of age, Alice is the youngest member of the cohort recruited by Mercy Services. She completed a Diploma in Community Based Rehabilitation at Solomon Islands National University (SINU) in 2018 and undertook a six-week internship with Kiluufi Hospital in Malaita.

In 2019 with support from the Australian Government, Alice completed a Certificate 3 in Individual Support at the Australia Pacific Training Coalition (APTC) in Suva. The four-month course built on her SINU studies and provided Alice with the qualification required by Australian employers.

“I am really excited about working in Australia. I am passionate about helping people and am looking forward to working with elderly people in Australia”

“Going to Australia is a great opportunity to learn new skills, which will help me when I return to Solomon Islands. I can’t wait to use the skills from my SINU studies”.

The PLS commenced on 1 July 2018 and enables citizens from selected Pacific countries to take up low and semi-skilled work in rural and regional Australia for up to three years. Solomon Islands



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joined the scheme in September 2018. The Scheme is focused on sectors with projected employment growth in Australia and contains protections to safeguard against worker exploitation.

For PLS, workers are recruited from the Labour Mobility Unit (LMU) managed Work Ready Pool. At present, there are no open recruitments being held for PLS.

People should be aware of labour mobility scams. No one should pay money to individuals promising work. Anyone who is approached by someone claiming to facilitate work in Australia in exchange for money should contact the Labour Mobility Unit and RSIPF to report the incident.

For more information about the Solomon Islands seasonal workforce:

www.heretoworksolomons.com

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Left to right: Australian High Commissioner Dr Strahan and Secretary to the Prime Minister Dr Rodgers with first PLS aged care workers (from left to right) Monica, Hellen, Melvina and Alice.



Ms Lou Ellerton (First Secretary – Australian High Commission), Mr George Tuti (Director of Trade) and Mr Glynn Milhench (APTC) with PLS aged care workers (from left to right) Hellen, Alice, Monica and Melvina.



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Thumbs up for the first ever all female group of PLS workers.