



NFF BRIEFING PAPER

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| TO: | Su McCluskey, CEO; Michael Pyers, General Manager of Workforce and Legal Affairs; NFF Workforce Committee |
| FROM: | Barry Young, Policy Officer-Workforce and Legal Affairs |
| SUBJECT: | Government Amendment to PALM Scheme – 30-Hour Safety Net |
| DATE: | 16 October 2025 |

Overview

The Federal Government has announced changes to the PALM scheme relating to the 30-hour minimum work requirement. The announcement was released late on Tuesday with limited prior consultation, drawing criticism from unions including the ACTU.

An SBS News report on the change can be accessed here:

[Labor criticised over worker visa rule backflip that could affect thousands \(SBS News\)](#)

Key Details

- The Government has amended the PALM Scheme settings to average the 30-hour safety net over a four-week period, instead of requiring 30 hours each week.
- The change provides greater short-term flexibility for employers and workers, particularly in industries with variable workloads such as horticulture.
- The ACTU and other union groups have publicly criticised the move, suggesting it weakens worker protections.
- The change was not widely publicised before implementation, and limited details are currently available on operational guidance.

Proposed NFF's Response

- The NFF welcomes the Government's amendment as a positive and pragmatic step towards greater flexibility in the PALM Scheme.
 - However, the reform does not go far enough.
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- The NFF maintains that the preferred model is to allow the 30-hour safety net to be averaged over the duration of a worker's placement, reflecting the seasonal and operational realities of agricultural work.
- NFF will continue to advocate for a consistent, practical, and sustainable framework that supports both employers and workers.