

PACIFIC UPDATE

Australia's Pacific Engagement Visa: Can it be strengthened to meet the Blue Pacific?

Pacific Mobility Index

Natasha Turia Moka

Akka Rimon

Michael Kabuni

Jope Tarai

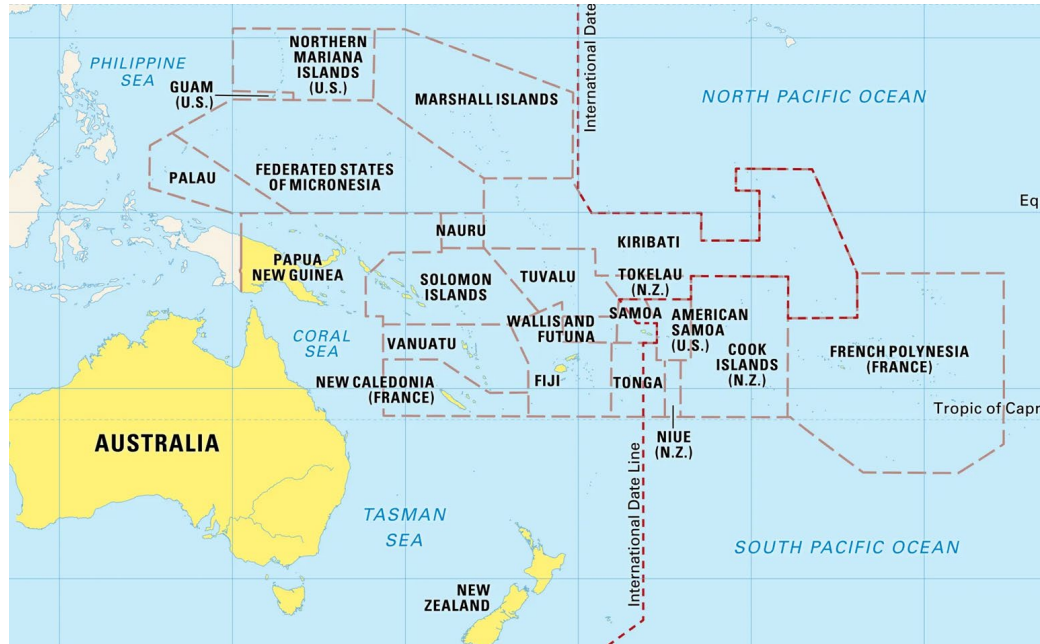
13-15 June 2023, Suva, Fiji



Australian
National
University



Outline



Pacific Engagement Visa

- Where did it come from?
- What is it & where are we now?
- Country quota vs strategic selection

Pacific Mobility Index (*conceptual framework*)

- Where did it come from?
- Strategic selection inspired by Pacific virtues
- Conceptual framework

Pacific Engagement Visa

Where did it come from?

In April, 2022 the Labour Party commitments to the Pacific family as part of its campaign efforts to form Government. Revolutionary visa is to go live in July, 2023.

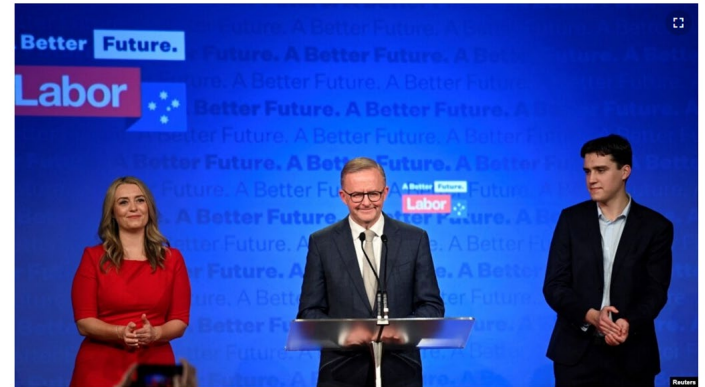
“Rather than just talking tough with no follow through, Labor will provide practical support for our neighbours to improve their security and protect their economies”.

“Nothing is more central to the security and economies of the Pacific than climate change. As Pacific leaders themselves put it plainly in the first article of the 2018 Pacific Island Forum’s Boe Declaration on Regional Security”

“A partner that will listen, and that will strengthen the Pacific family.”

Source: <https://anthonyalbanese.com.au/media-centre/labors-plan-for-a-stronger-pacific-family>

Labor Wins Australian Election



Source: <https://www.voanews.com/a/labor-wins-australian-election/6583744.html>

Pacific Engagement Visa

What is it & where are we now?

- 3,000 lottery visas for eligible citizens from the Blue Pacific continent & Timor Leste.
- Involves an online pre-application process through a ballot system - randomly selected and then invited to apply for the highly prized visa. Conditional upon securing employment.
- A non-refundable application fee of \$25.00.
- Visas would be granted through country pro-rata. Considerations for climate impacted & low access.
- Opposition opposed the Migration Amendment Bills in March & referred to Parliamentary Senate inquiry for further deliberation.
- 23 submissions received & Senate decides end of this month of its delivery.



Source: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-03-07/pacific-visa-lottery-opposed-by-coalition/102063516>

Pacific Engagement Visa

Country quota v's strategic selection

- Not based only on country pro rata
- Three suggested categories:
 - High access
 - Low access
 - Climate affected atoll countries
- Re-allocation of visas - minimum of 50 spots
- Exclusion: Cook Islands, French Polynesia, New Caledonia and Niue

Where else can we look to for regional cooperation, harmony and prosperity as citizens of the Blue Pacific continent?

Source: <https://devpolicy.org/pacific-engagement-visa-quotas-need-to-be-set-strategically-20220722/>

Table 2. Pacific population, Australian diaspora, and final recommended allocation

	Population	Diaspora in Australia	Diaspora/population (%)	Final recommended allocation
High access				
Fiji	896,440	98,462	11.0	50
Samoa	198,410	75,755	38.2	50
Tonga	105,700	32,697	30.9	50
Low access				
Papua New Guinea	8,947,030	18,798	0.2	2,020
Solomon Islands	686,880	1,880	0.3	180
Vanuatu	307,150	962	0.3	100
Timor-Leste	1,318,440	8,962	0.7	350
Climate-affected atoll countries				
Kiribati	119,450	875	0.7	100
Tuvalu	11,790	707	6.0	50
Nauru	10,830	511	4.7	50
All countries	12,602,120	239,609	1.9	3,000

Pacific Mobility Index

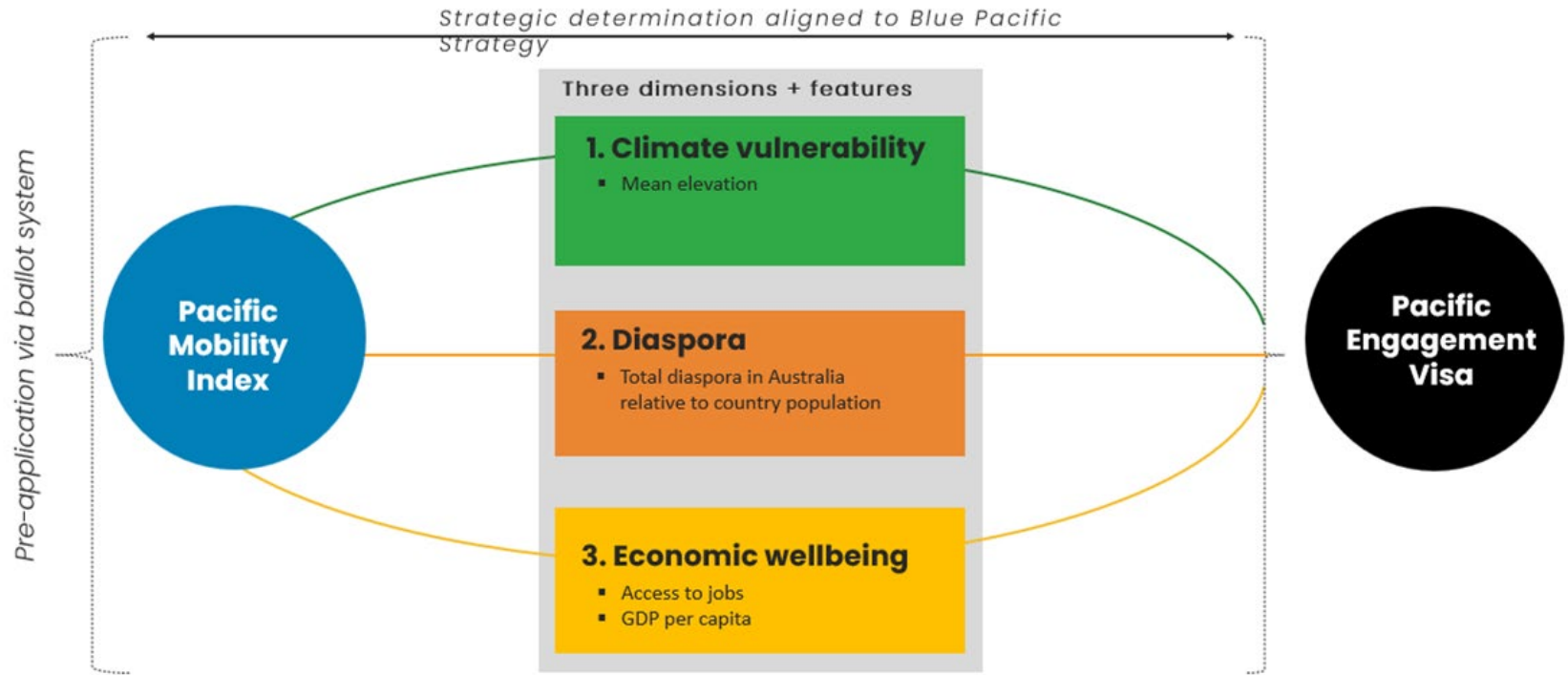
Strategic selection inspired by Pacific virtues

- Avoid competition through regional cooperation & agreement
- Similar UN Human Development Index framework - ranking system based on priorities of each Pacific family member
- Three suggested dimensions:
 - Climate vulnerability - mean elevation
 - Access - % diaspora relative to country population
 - Economic wellbeing
- Re-allocation of visas - should be brokered through PIFS, apex regional body
- Timor Leste can broker with Australia through appropriate agency



Pacific Mobility Index

Conceptual framework



Pacific Mobility Index

Where did it come from?

- Realisation for alignment to regional aspirations and agreements as espoused in the *2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent*.
- Promotes virtues of “peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity, so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy, and productive lives”
- Recognition of Australia’s commitments to the Pacific family - “climate change”
- Need for a practical way forward - fair and strategic selection for determination of PEVs that represents competing priorities of each Pacific family member.



Source: <https://www.forumsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/PIFS-2050-Strategy-Blue-Pacific-Continent-WEB-5Aug2022.pdf>

We include Timor Leste in the PMI, but cannot speak to their aspirations and priorities as they are not a member of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.

THANK YOU

Natasha Turia-Moka, Akka Rimon, Jope Tarai, Michael Kabuni

*Department of Pacific Affairs
Australian National University*



**Australian
National
University**