

# PEV perseverance pays

by Stephen Howes and Natasha Turia

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Timor-Leste is now the top Pacific Engagement Visa performer

Photo Credit: [Wikimedia/NavalSurface](#)

Between July and December of last year, the number of Pacific Engagement Visas (PEVs) granted to individuals selected in the 2024 ballot climbed from 1,188 to 1,776. That means the success rate for the first PEV annual round has **climbed from 40% to 59%**. That's the difference between a fail and a creditable performance. It indicates that, for all the problems applicants have encountered, overall the new Pacific Engagement Visa is working.

To remind readers, the annual PEV ballot is open to citizens of nearly all Pacific countries as well as Timor-Leste. In its first year (2024), **171,927 registrations were received, and, in its second year, 186,783**.

In each year, 3,000 lucky individuals are selected through the ballot to apply for a PEV visa. They then need to meet several requirements in order to actually get a visa, **the most important and difficult of which** is obtaining a minimum one-year offer of employment anywhere in Australia.

A decent first-year result is obviously good news for those who were offered the opportunity through the ballot to secure permanent residency in Australia. It is also essential for the PEV for two reasons.

First, it will help consolidate support for this new visa domestically. The Coalition **opposed the PEV legislation** when it came to parliament in 2023. Since then, they have said very little about this new scheme. If it is working well, it will be very hard for the Coalition to oppose it. (The fact that it is also quite difficult to get a visa even after success in the PEV ballot might also appeal to the Coalition.)

Second, while the **PEV is already very popular across the Pacific**, if the transition from ballot success to visa issuance came to be seen as too difficult, then fewer would apply in subsequent PEV rounds. In other words, the higher the success or conversion rate in early PEV rounds, the more applications there will be for future PEV rounds. This in turn will help secure the new visa's future.

As it is, the latest figures augur well for the future of the PEV. The people in the first PEV round are the pioneers. As time goes on, employers will become more familiar with the visa and those selected by ballot will have a better network to draw on to help them find a job. If the PEV pioneers can get to a 60% success rate, then future applicants will do even better.

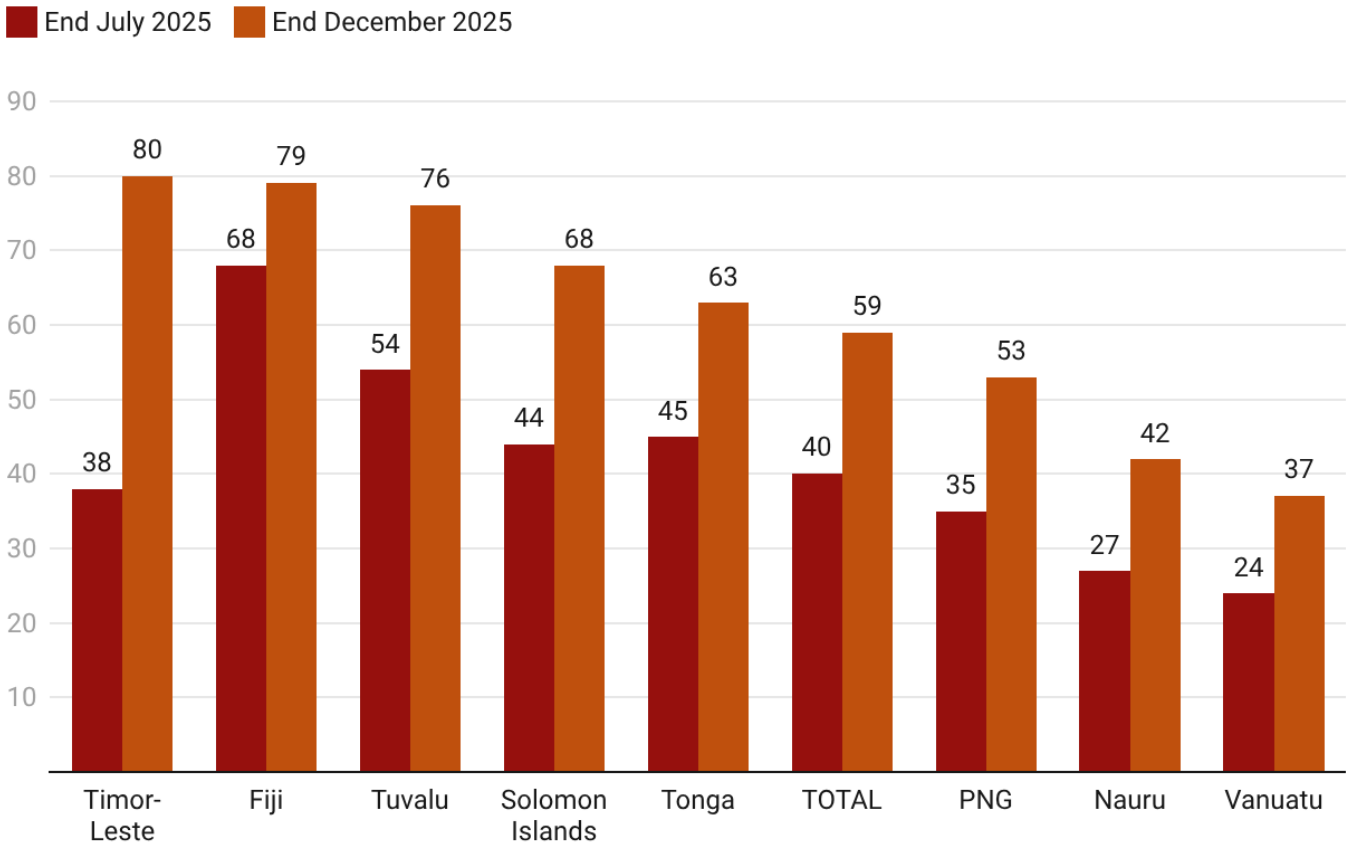
And it is not over yet. Between July and December about 120 visas were granted every month, with no downward trend other than an understandable dip in December. Some visa applicants will have already stopped trying. Some will not be successful. But some will persevere. How much further the PEV success rate climbs remains to be seen, but my guess based on the last five months of data is that the final result will be over 70%.

There are some big country differences. Timor-Leste has displaced Fiji as the most successful PEV source country. The share of Timorese who were granted a visa rocketed up from 38% in July to 80% in December. That's very impressive for a nation with a small diaspora. Fiji is now in second place with a success rate of 79%, followed closely by Tuvalu at 76%.

Solomon Islands, Tonga and PNG have all passed the 50% threshold. PNG has a conversion rate of 53%. Since PNG is the biggest PEV source country, it is very significant that its success rate has passed 50%.

The two other 2024 PEV countries, Nauru and Vanuatu, continue to struggle, with Nauru's success rate at 42% and Vanuatu's at 37%. Both countries are disadvantaged by their small diaspora in Australia, but why Vanuatu has done so much worse than Solomon Islands is unclear.

**Figure 1: 2024-25 PEV success rate (%)**



Note: The PEV success rate is the ratio of visas granted to visas allocated in the 2024-25 PEV round.

Source: Department of Home Affairs • Created with Datawrapper

Visa grants from the 2025 PEV round are not yet known, except for the Tuvalu Falepili Union visa, which is a close cousin of the regular PEV visa and also operated by lottery. Tuvalu was awarded 280 Falepili visas in 2025, and already 220 individuals have been granted visas, a 79% success rate. This is because **the Falepili visa has no employment requirement.**

For the regular PEV visa, finding a job is clearly a significant barrier to moving from PEV ballot success to PEV visa grant. It is not, however, as these December results show, an insurmountable one. PEV perseverance pays.

*Notes: Samoa and Kiribati did not participate in the 2024 PEV, but are in the 2025 round. The two other PEV-participating countries, RMI and FSM, have had negligible PEV applications and grants. (Both already have unrestricted migration rights to the United States.) The data used in this blog was provided by the Department of Home Affairs.*

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