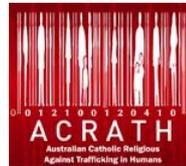




**The Freedom Partnership**  
**End Modern Slavery**



www.acrath.org.au  
 People are NOT for sale

Dear Stop the Traffik Members,

The Salvation Army and ACRATH are currently advocating to prevent the passage of certain provisions in the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendments (2014 Budget Measures) 2014 Bill No. 2, (Schedule 9). If passed, individuals under 30 on Special Benefit will become subject to a six month exclusion period. This includes victims of slavery and migrant victims of domestic violence holding temporary spouse visas, some of whom may be victims of forced or servile marriage, including children. This legislation is now before the Senate. We are asking members of the network to write in to Minister Kevin Andrews, Minister for Social Services and to all Senators, to request that Special Benefit be removed in entirety from this legislation. Please let us know if you do send a letter so we can track our success!

Below is a sample letter you may use or adapt.

The Honourable Kevin Andrews  
 Minister for Social Services  
 PO Box 6022  
 House of Representatives  
 Parliament House  
 Canberra ACT 2600  
 Email: menzies@aph.gov.au  
 Salutation: Dear Minister

Senator \_\_\_\_\_  
 PO Box 6100  
 Senate  
 Parliament House  
 Canberra ACT 2600

senator.surname@aph.gov.au

Dear Senator (Minister if Senator is in the Ministry)

Under the Social Security and Other Legislation Amendments (2014 Budget Measures) 2014 Bill No. 2, (Schedule 9), individuals under 30 on Special Benefit will become subject to a six month exclusion period, including victims of slavery and/or forced, child, and servile marriage. As such, these individuals will lose income at the most vulnerable stage of their recovery, a consequence we think the Government did not anticipate when drafting the proposed legislation. The Government has stated the purpose for the proposed changes is to improve incentives for Australians to find and retain employment. If this is true, it is illogical to include Special Benefit, a form of assistance provided on the basis that a person is in “severe financial hardship” and is “unable to work for reasons outside their control.”<sup>1</sup>

The proposed change undermines the basic tenet of the support, which is explained in FaHCSIA Annual Report 2012-13: “Vulnerable people should be protected from harm and entrenched disadvantage and given financial support in times of crisis. Income support can help those vulnerable to harm or disadvantage regain control of their lives. The Special Benefit assists people in severe financial hardship due to circumstances beyond their control.”<sup>2</sup>

We have heard that a compromise may be under consideration, whereby the six month waiting period is decreased to one month. We have also received reassurances that there will be exemption criteria in the final legislation, which may address our concerns; however, based on the eligibility criteria described above, it would be more appropriate to remove Special Benefit in entirety from the proposed measures than rely on “after the fact” remedies. One month remains too long for a person in severe financial hardship. Whilst it may seem satisfactory to provide exemptions and waivers, in reality, they often create further barriers and complicate systems vulnerable people already struggle to navigate. Without this crucial financial support, it will take much longer for victims to recover and as such, they will be less or completely unable to cooperate with law enforcement to help investigate and prosecute slave holders and traffickers. We urge you to remove Special Benefit from the legislation entirely and protect vulnerable people’s ability to access immediate and critical financial assistance. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Yours Faithfully,

To help us track advocacy, please email a copy of your letter to [endslavery@ae.salvationarmy.org](mailto:endslavery@ae.salvationarmy.org).

1 <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/centrelink/special-benefit>

2 FaHCSIA Annual Report 2012-13, p 56.