



Community Welcomes Changes for Victims

Sydney - Today, community organisations welcome the announcement of changes to supports for victims of human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices in Australia. Minister for Social Services, the Hon. Scott Morrison and Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for Women, Senator the Hon. Michaelia Cash announced these reforms in relation to victims of human trafficking:

1. Renaming the permanent Witness Protection Trafficking Visa (WPTV) to protect victims' confidentiality
2. Removing the Criminal Justice Stay Visa (CJSV) from the framework, to be replaced with a new visa framework
3. Adding eligibility for the Adult Migrant English Program for bridging visa holders
4. Removing the two-year waiting period for an alternate support payment to Special Benefit after grant of the permanent visa

“These changes represent our collective work with victims who have faced real barriers to rebuilding free and independent lives,” says Christine Carolan, Executive Officer of Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH). ACRATH provides pastoral and material support to victims and conducts education and awareness-raising.

“These improvements will bring greater security and certainty to people who have been victims of slavery and trafficking in Australia. The changes reflect a more victim-centred approach and will strengthen survivors' ability to make choices about their lives and to cooperate more effectively in criminal justice proceedings against traffickers and slaveholders if they choose to do so,” says Anti-Slavery Australia director, Jennifer Burn. Anti-Slavery Australia at UTS was established in 2003 and continues to provide pro bono legal advice and representation to trafficked people.

“We have been advocating for these changes with our colleagues for many years now so that trafficked men, women and children have access to the supports they need to help them recover from their experiences and rebuild their lives. These changes signal to us that Government recognises how vital it is for victims to get the right supports at the right time,” says Jenny Stanger, National Manager of the Salvos Freedom Partnership to End Modern Slavery. The Salvos have operated a Safe House and case management service for victims since 2008.

Human trafficking is the physical movement of people across or within borders through coercion, threat or deception for the purpose of exploiting them when they reach their destination.

Slavery occurs when a person exercises the rights of ownership over another person.

Practices involving exploitation so serious that they are considered similar to slavery are known as slavery-like practices.

Slavery-like practices include:

◇ servitude ◇ forced labour ◇ deceptive recruiting ◇ debt bondage ◇ forced marriage

These crimes all have different elements – they may involve exploitation in the public or the private sphere; they may occur in any industry, including the sex, agriculture, construction, hospitality, or domestic services industries; and they may or may not require the victim to be moved across a border.

What they all have in common, however, is that they involve the manipulation of complex relationships between the offender and the victim, and that they result in the serious undermining of the victim's personal freedom and ability to make choices for themselves. This can be through the use of physical threats or psychological coercion, because they are treated as property, or, in some cases, because they are literally bought or sold.

(Excerpt from Australian Government [National Action Plan to Combat People Trafficking and Slavery 2015 – 2019](#))

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