



18 February 2016

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Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement  
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Canberra ACT 2600  
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### **Inquiry into Human Trafficking**

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) is the national peak body representing Australia's culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and their organisations. FECCA provides advocacy, develops policy and promotes issues on behalf of its constituency to Government and the broader community. FECCA supports multiculturalism, community harmony, social justice and the rejection of all forms of discrimination and racism so as to build a productive and culturally rich Australian society. FECCA's policies are developed around the concepts of empowerment and inclusion and are formulated with the common good of all Australians in mind.

FECCA endorses the submission and recommendations made by The Salvation Army Freedom Partnership to End Modern Slavery to this inquiry.

### **Groups vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation in Australia**

Social isolation and lack of support networks are key factors that make individuals vulnerable to exploitation.

People from CALD backgrounds are among the most vulnerable in the workplace and tend to be concentrated in the sectors of the job market which create a potential for exploitation. Factors which contribute to this vulnerability and lack of bargaining power include lack of familiarity with a new culture and customs and lack of English language proficiency. The Australian Greek Welfare society found that exploitation of migrant and refugee workers was occurring in Australia, in particular paying employees below the minimum wage.<sup>1</sup>

Newly arrived migrants, including refugees and temporary migrants, often do not have an understanding of their entitlements under the Australian workplace relations scheme including the National Minimum Wage or National Employment Standards. These workers

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<sup>1</sup> Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Bridging our growing divide: Inequality in Australia* (December 2014), 59 – 60.

are also not aware of enforcement mechanisms that exist including the services provided by the Fair Work Ombudsman.<sup>2</sup> Temporary migrants, refugees and other CALD groups may fear and mistrust authorities, making them reluctant to come forward when they are subject to exploitation or trafficking.

Migrant and refugee workers often bear the heavy responsibility of providing financial support for family in their country of origin, increasing their vulnerability to coercion and exploitation. In a study conducted by Professor Graeme Hugo and cited in the Senate committee report on inequality in Australia, the research found that it was not unusual for recent African migrants to send 10 to 20 per cent of their weekly income to their families in their homeland or in a refugee camp.<sup>3</sup>

CALD and migrant women escaping domestic violence are also vulnerable to exploitation as they may have limited support networks and a vital need for funds to pay for housing and other living costs.

### **The role of community organisations**

Community organisations and service providers, including multicultural settlement sector organisations and ethno-specific organisations, are well connected to CALD communities across Australia. Given their connection to these communities, these organisations are well placed to recognise human trafficking and exploitation, however there is little awareness of the issue.

The hidden nature of human trafficking, exploitation and slavery makes it difficult to determine the extent of these crimes in Australia. Raising awareness and knowledge of warning signs amongst community organisations and multicultural settlement service providers who work directly with vulnerable groups will increase the detection of victims.

### **Recommendations**

- Provide training for community organisations and service providers to recognise indicators of human trafficking and exploitation, and increase knowledge of relevant referral pathways.
- Provide support to community organisations to deliver training to new migrants, or serve as a conduit for such training, to raise awareness of the issue amongst vulnerable groups.

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<sup>2</sup> Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Bridging our growing divide*, 60.

<sup>3</sup> Senate Community Affairs References Committee, *Bridging our growing divide: Inequality in Australia* (December 2014), 125; Professor Graeme Hugo and the Department of Immigration and Citizenship, *A significant contribution: The economic, social and civic contributions of first and second generation humanitarian entrants*, 'Summary of findings', 2011, 40.