

To the Secretary of the Committee

I wish to support the provisions of this legislation. I have been involved for some years in the issues raised by abuse of women trafficked to Australia and now labour immigration. I am aware of the increasing pressure of these practices on the social fabric of our society and the necessity of legal means of countering this trade. At present the Law is in need of these clearer definitions and further provisions to have a meaningful deterrent and secure conviction of traffickers. The considerable support given thus far by Government to agencies dealing with this growing problem is to be commended, however, without the power to convict and restrict those who deal in this trade, the police are being hampered.

The improved definition of exploitation is necessary as well as the the provision against Forced and Servile Marriage and the psychological methods of bondage and slavery. Forced Labour is increasingly being recognised in the community and while we have so many people who do not speak English or know our laws, it is imperative for the police and other agencies to have laws to enable them to deal with these cases when they find them. The availability of reparation for victims of trafficking and forced labour is very necessary and a very important provision.

The other point I would like to make is that I believe it is important to have the Laws outlined and published in the main languages of the many ethnic groups who are coming to our country so that all should be informed beforehand of the labour laws and personal rights and where to contact when assistance or information is needed.

Knowing ahead of time about Forced and Servile Marriage may influence some. Ignorance of the Law and of their human rights, increases fear of authorities and the victims' vulnerability. All Visa holders - Student and Work Visas - and immigrants should be informed of where to go for help when they need it. Lack of language and distrust of police hampers their freedom and makes them more vulnerable. Immigrant families should be informed about the Forced and Servile Marriage Law and the penalties available. It may discourage some who might practice this custom.

I urge support of all measures in this well founded legislation and thank the Committee for their consideration,

Mrs Marion Smith AM