



# Just In Time

CLRI(NSW) Social Justice Committee

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## If one of us is chained none of us are free

### Introduction

We would like to feel that slavery does not have a place in our century or our country, but the sad truth is that slavery is not a thing of the past, nor is it foreign to Australia. It is shocking to learn that there are currently approximately 12.3 million people in forced labour across the world, 2.45 million of whom have been trafficked. This is a serious social justice issue that involves all Australians, and there are many organisations dedicated to stopping this modern slave trade.

On July 24 and 25 the Anti-Slavery Project held an Australian Trafficking Forum at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). The forum brought together a diverse range of people whose work brings them into contact with trafficking at its various stages.

This issue of Just in Time will give a brief outline of some of the key issues surrounding trafficking in Australia and alert you to ways that you can help.

### What is trafficking?

**What is human trafficking?** It involves the recruitment of people into exploitative labour, where they are transported to another country to carry out unpaid or under-paid work for the profit of those detaining them.

**Who is trafficked?** As pointed out by World Vision CEO, Tim Costello, trafficking is directly linked to poverty. Some victims are trafficked against their will. Some enter into trafficking situations unaware of the fact that they will be exploited. For others who cannot feed themselves or their families, the promise of work in a developed country is enough for them to enter into trafficking, even if they are aware that it involves exploitation.

**Who are the traffickers?** Trafficking exists to supply cheap, exploitative labour to many different industries, including the sex industry, construction, agriculture, housekeeping, and to restaurants, factories and salons. Those controlling and detaining the trafficked persons are able to garner substantial profits. The Australian Federal Police (AFP) have developed a Transnational Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking Team (TSETT) with specially-trained members working to identify and break down the international networks responsible for trafficking to Australia.

**How does it work?** Many victims of trafficking are bound to their captors through '**debt contracts**', which are arbitrary sums of money demanded of the victim by their 'sponsor' as compensation for the expense of bringing them to Australia. Some have been asked to pay up to \$45,000, meaning that they can work without pay for years before finally repaying their 'debt'. Other forms of controlling trafficking victims are through marriage and false adoption. In most cases, violence and threats are used to keep the trafficked persons from fleeing or reporting their abuse.

### Destination: Australia

In order to understand Australia's role in preventing human trafficking, we have to understand how we fit into its mechanisms. Australia is a **destination country** for human trafficking. In some cases, trafficked persons come to Australia on valid working holiday visas, arranged by their 'sponsors'. However, as these visas can be issued electronically, no scrutiny is placed on the nature of the work to be undertaken by the applicant. Once they enter Australia, the trafficked persons can easily have their freedom of movement restricted through the confiscation of their passports by their captors.

## Breaking the chains

Sadly, those who manage to break free from their enslavement and report their abuse still face a great struggle. One of the main problems currently receiving attention from anti-trafficking groups is the limited protection available to survivors in the current visa system.

In order to be eligible to receive a visa to stay in Australia, the victim must commit to assisting police investigations. The Bridging Visa F - which is a temporary visa designed specifically for people who are assisting with investigations into trafficking and illegal labour practices - is seen by many anti-trafficking groups as placing unfair restraints upon the victim.

Organisations such as the Anti-Slavery Project are lobbying the government to change the visa system so that people who have escaped slavery can gain a permanent visa whether or not they are willing to assist in police investigations. This is an essential part of the move towards a victim-centred approach to trafficking in Australia.

The Federal government is backing this move towards a more victim-centred and support services-focused approach. Visa amendments were included as one of the recommendations in the report 'Trafficking of women for sexual purposes' released by Minister for the Status of Women, Tanya Plibersek, at the Forum. You can read the report at the following address:

[http://www.ofw.facsia.gov.au/trafficking\\_of\\_women/default.htm](http://www.ofw.facsia.gov.au/trafficking_of_women/default.htm)

In the meantime, dozens of organizations, big and small, are working across Australia to support victims and survivors of trafficking. The CLRI(NSW) Social Justice Committee would like to congratulate all of these groups for their continuing and tireless efforts.

## How can we help?

One of the many reasons why slavery still exists in our world is that there is a growing demand for cheap labour across the world. One simple way that you can help fight trafficking is to stop contributing to this demand. By buying Fair Trade

certified products you can guarantee that you are not perpetuating labour exploitation.

Of course, donations are also essential to allow organisations such as the Anti-Slavery Project to continue their vital work. You can donate either your money or your time and skills by volunteering with the Anti-Slavery Project's Community Response Network. If you would like more information, follow the Anti-Slavery Project web link below or call 9514 9662.

Another simple, but crucial, thing that you can do to help is to talk about human trafficking with other people. By spreading awareness in the community you are ensuring that this social justice issue isn't ignored by Australians. We can all help to put slavery into the history books, the only place where it belongs.

### Web Links



We recommend that you visit the following sites for more information and links to ways that you can get active and help stop human trafficking and slavery.

#### Anti-Slavery Project

<http://www.antislavery.org.au>

#### Trafficking in Persons Clearinghouse – plus links to information on ACRATH

<http://www.goodshepherd.com.au/justice/traffickingprojects.html>

#### World Vision – Don't Trade Lives Campaign

<http://www.donttradelives.com.au>

#### Project Respect

<http://www.projectrespect.org.au>

#### TSETT

[http://www.afp.gov.au/international/human\\_trafficking.html](http://www.afp.gov.au/international/human_trafficking.html)

#### Fair Trade – find out where to buy products

<http://www.fairtrade.com.au>

#### Fairwear Australia

<http://www.fairwear.org.au>



#### CLRI(NSW) – you can read past issues of Just In Time online

<http://www.clrinsw.org>

Just in Time is an occasional publication of the Social Justice Committee of CLRI(NSW). Members of the committee are: Sr Jan Barnett rsj, Sr Suzette Clark rsc, Ms Sandie Cornish, Br Stephen Cram cfc, Ms Frances Egan, Sr Grace Ellul sm, Ms Jill Finnane, Fr Brian Fitzpatrick osa, Sr Margaret Hinchey rsm, Sr Geraldine Kearney sgs, Sr Anne Lane pbvm, Mr Pedro Moreira, Fr Claude Mostowik msc, Sr Kathleen O'Connor rsj, Sr Sharon Price rsm, Sr Libby Rogerson ibvm.  
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