



MEDIA RELEASE

INQUIRY ESTABLISHED INTO MODERN SLAVERY RISKS FACED BY TEMPORARY MIGRANT WORKERS IN RURAL AND REGIONAL NEW SOUTH WALES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

15 October 2024

The Modern Slavery Committee has commenced an inquiry into modern slavery risks faced by temporary migrant workers in rural and regional New South Wales. Focussing on the lived experience of workers, the inquiry will cast a spotlight on the working conditions and labour practices in agriculture, horticulture, meat processing and other industries reliant on temporary migrant labour.

Dr Joe McGirr MP, Chair of the committee stated: 'The number of temporary migrant workers has grown dramatically over the last five years, and that growth is set to continue with existing schemes expanding into aged care and tourism. These schemes benefit New South Wales and its rural communities, and also provide development pathways for migrant workers and their families. However, given the unique structural factors that apply to this workforce, we have an overwhelming humanitarian responsibility to ensure these workers are not taken advantage of or exploited by unscrupulous operators'.

'The Anti-slavery Commissioner's recent report, *Be Our Guests*, made for concerning reading. It uncovered several risks that warrant further examination, including troubling evidence of slavery-like practices and conditions within agriculture, horticulture and meat processing. There is, arguably, a no more appropriate use of the committee's powers and remit under the *Modern Slavery Act*,' Dr McGirr added.

'Our first order of business is to understand – from individuals with firsthand experience – the incidence, causes and extent of modern slavery risks among vulnerable temporary migrant workers. It is important that those individuals are supported to share their experiences on their own terms. While key policy settings fall under the Australian Government's jurisdiction, gathering this evidence will enable the committee to identify potential opportunities for NSW law makers to influence outcomes and make sensible recommendations to safeguard migrant worker rights in New South Wales'.

The inquiry will also consider resourcing needs among local community groups, NSW Government frontline agencies and non-government service providers who often support temporary migrant workers at a local level.

Engaging with the committee

Submissions can be sent via the submission [portal](#) by 31 January 2025.

Once submissions are received, the committee will schedule hearings and meet with individuals with lived experience. More details will be provided in the new year.

For further information about the inquiry, including the terms of reference, please visit the committee's [website](#).

-ENDS-

For further information please contact Committee Chair, Dr Joe McGirr MP, on (02) 6921 1622.