

**Submission
No 7**

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

Organisation: Linking Communities Network Ltd

Date Received: 21 January 2025

19th January 2025

Re: Inquiry into modern slavery risks faced by temporary migrant workers in rural and regional NSW

To whom it may concern,

I write this letter from the experience of Linking Communities Network Ltd (LCN) – a homelessness and domestic and family violence service in Griffith NSW operating services in the Murrumbidgee District.

LCN operates many programs including a domestic and family violence refuge that supports women with or without dependent children experiencing or escaping violence. Over the past 8 months there has been a dramatic increase of female clients who are associated with the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme. In addition to this our homelessness service has also seen an increase in referrals (both self and from other agencies) of clients who have become homeless or who are at risk of homelessness due to the poverty experienced whilst employed under the scheme.

Domestic violence survivors are reporting to the service that they are forced to live in uninhabitable dwellings, often with up to 20 other workers, and they are forced to pay exorbitant rent for a bed in a share house. Often violence occurs within a short timeframe for the women clients which leaves them in vulnerable situations, with no income if they cannot continue working and no means to get accommodation elsewhere. Sometimes the women see pregnancy as an option to remain permanently in Australia and are under the false pretence that having a baby in Australia automatically makes that baby a citizen of this country. The women have no means to provide for the baby once it is born and services like ours are called upon for support and financial and material aid. Add to the fact that if they are asked to leave the accommodation provided for them as part of the scheme there are no options for other accommodation due to lack of income, and this causes a bottleneck in services as there are no exit points.

Workers that approach the service whilst employed report to us that the need to pay back the airfare and associated costs with the scheme in the first few months of employment leaves them beneath the poverty line in terms of ability to self-fund clothing, food and other necessary items whilst under employ. Again, the high cost of accommodation leaves them with only a limited amount of money to be able to feed themselves each week. Add the inability to work if the weather is a factor – therefore not getting paid and you have a perfect storm for a poverty stricken workforce. This is why workers leave employment and seek cash money elsewhere, and thus not fulfilling employment requirements.

All of the above constitutes modern slavery. Every person in this country has the right to be able to afford to live each week, put food on the table and live in a safe environment. More education about the requirements and expectations in our country are required, closer monitoring of labour hire groups and more onus on industry to provide a fair wage and have plans if weather is a contributing factor to the inability to work need to be explored to

Incorporating the following Services:

Youth Links, Links For Women, Women's Domestic Violence Court Advocacy Services, Targeted Early Intervention Program, Sustaining Tenancies in Social Housing, Staying Home Leaving Violence, Crisis Accommodation Services for Women and Youth, Community Housing Provider, Men's services provided by partner Agency - Salvation Army

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make everyone able to participate under any scheme in Australia. Flow on effects need to be thought of at Government levels before such schemes are implemented.

Regards

Kirrilly Salvestro
Deputy CEO
