

Submission
No 33

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

Organisation: Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)

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Modern Slavery Committee
Parliament of New South Wales

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

Migrant workers make a significant contribution to the Australian economy and broader community. They are an essential part of rural and regional businesses and operations ranging from agriculture, horticulture, hospitality, cleaning and many other industries. When migrant workers come to Australia, they do so often to earn money and support their families – yet they are particularly vulnerable to mistreatment and unsafe working conditions. This has been evidenced in several inquiries including the [Hidden in Plain Sight](#) report, [Be Our Guests](#) report and the inquiry conducted by the [Senate Select Committee on Job Security](#).

Federal, State and Territory Governments are taking steps to counter modern slavery. The appointment of Australia's inaugural Anti-slavery Commissioner late last year (in addition to the existing NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner) is just one example of how governments can respond with meaningful action. However, the [McMillan Report](#) highlighted the need for more to be done, providing thirty recommendations to strengthen the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (Cth).

While there are positive steps that have been taken, temporary migrant workers in Australia need stronger, and more immediate, action to be taken. Federal, State and Territory Governments must all work together to do more to address unsafe working conditions and combat modern slavery, particularly in rural and regional areas where vulnerability is often exacerbated. Modern slavery and the mistreatment of migrant workers is insidious and violates Australia's international human rights obligations, including the right to be free of slavery and right to safe and healthy working conditions.

To this end, the risks identified by the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner in the [Be Our Guests](#) report require urgent attention. I would endorse the recommendations made by the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner and encourage the Modern Slavery Committee to adopt those recommendations.

Modern slavery flourishes when hidden in plain sight. It is critical that this Committee not only highlights the modern slavery risks faced by temporary migrant workers in rural and regional New South Wales, but also identifies the direct action that is necessary to address these risks and protect people from harm.

I would be pleased to discuss this submission further.

Yours sincerely

Lorraine Finlay
Human Rights Commissioner