

**Parliamentary Joint Committee on the
Australian Crime Commission**

**Inquiry into trafficking in women for
sexual servitude**

Submission No:12

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17 September 2003

The Secretary
Parliamentary Joint Committee on the Australian Crime Commission
Suite S1 107
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: New Inquiry: Trafficking in Women Sexual Servitude

The Victorian Immigrant and Refugee Women's Coalition (VIRWC) write with concern of the trafficking issue in our country and urge the Australian Government to introduce legislation that will help women and children who are being exploited through trafficking with the aim to eradicate this practise in our country. This practise is unacceptable and should be punished as a criminal offence.

The VIRWC supports and represents the interests of Immigrant and Refugee Women in Victoria. It recognises that this demographic is vulnerable to trafficking and therefore supports Project Respect in its work to stop this practice in Australia.

We propose the following:

- That the Australian Government ratify the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children;
- Legislative changes to be made to protect trafficked women, including women who have consented to do prostitution but who have been deceived about the conditions of that prostitution.
- That there be a whole-of-government approach to trafficking that puts trafficked women and children's protection at the centre of the approach, and involves NGOs and local, state and federal government authorities.
- That a trafficking-victims' visa be introduced to allow women to stay in Australia if they give information to police or testify in a trafficking case - such visas are available in the United States and other countries.
- That the visa provides a 'reflection delay' of three months that allows suspected trafficked women to recover from the violence they have

experienced and considers whether they wish to provide information to the authorities – (such visas are available in the Netherlands).

- An alternative detention system so that potential trafficked victims are not detained at Villawood or Maribyrnong Immigration Detention Centres if they are detained by DIMIA;
- That a full range of recovery services to be provided to trafficked women, including accommodation, counselling etc.
- That the Australian Government address the demand for trafficked women by 'customers';
- That more overseas aid to be directed at addressing the factors that make trafficked women vulnerable, including violence against women, war, inequality etc;
- That bi-lateral and multi-lateral initiatives that ensure that trafficked women who return to sending countries are linked in with support agencies in those countries;
- That the Australian Government supports specialist NGOs such as Project Respect that address trafficking.

VIRWC has worked in partnership with Project Respect on the project "From anecdotes to action: women documenting human rights violations", a project that empowered women to document human rights violations in their respective communities with 15 participants funded by the Reichstein Foundation.

VIRWC aims to encourage change in the lives of immigrant and refugee women and supports the introduction of legislation that will facilitate such change.

If you need to discuss our concerns further please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Yours sincerely,



Melba Marginson
Chairwoman VIRWC