

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

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

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Submission to Parliamentary Inquiry into Trafficking in Women Sexual Servitude

From National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence

Background

The National Association of Services Against Sexual Violence is the national peak body of services that have a primary purpose of providing support and advocacy to victim/survivors of sexual assault.

We have prepared this submission because we recognise that where women are put in a situation where they must provide sexual services to survive and cannot exercise a choice to stop, that is a form of sexual violence.

Our starting point is that we recognise that protection should be made available for women, whether or not they have come to Australia voluntarily for the purposes of sex work. While laws relating to sex work differ around Australia, it should be made clear that the practice of placing women in a position of sexual servitude will not be tolerated. Both women who are brought to Australia believing they will be doing other work and women who come voluntarily to work in prostitution, must be offered protection if the conditions of their work amount to sexual servitude and the persons responsible for that servitude must be held accountable.

Unfortunately, when sexual servitude is identified by police or other authorities, some of the women end up in Detention Centres and are then subjected to further deprivations of their rights to liberty and freedom. Given the specific experiences of this group of women, it seems that alternative accommodation to the detention system is urgently required, so that they do not experience further punishment for the circumstances in which they find themselves.

The current inquiry into trafficking of women for sexual servitude provides a timely opportunity for the Australian government to show its commitment to this very serious human rights issue and to work towards the promotion of rights for those who are most vulnerable. Such an approach would place trafficked women and children's protection at the core. Some of the recommendations that we believe would be effective in the long term include:

- Developing a whole of government approach to trafficking including NGOs, local and state governments and agencies
- Providing accommodation which is not in detention centers for trafficked women where they can receive support and counseling from local agencies, the support could be developed along the lines of crisis care provided by services that work with victim/survivors of sexual assault
- Providing secure ongoing funding for agencies such as Project Respect to act as advocates for trafficked women and children and to coordinate access to the range of services that may be required to facilitate recovery from the trauma that the women have experienced
- legislative changes that are aimed at better protecting trafficked women and children, while holding those who are responsible for the trafficking accountable for their actions
- Australia could also draw on the approaches undertaken by other countries on this issue, including the United States of America and the Netherlands. In these countries a trafficking-victims visa is available, enabling these women to remain in the country if

they provide information to law enforcement authorities or are willing to testify in trafficking cases. A temporary visa as available in the Netherlands, would also allow these women to begin to recover from their ordeals, during which time counselling or alternative accommodation services may need to be accessed.

- Bi-lateral and multi-lateral initiatives that ensure that trafficked women who return to their countries are linked in with support agencies in those countries would also be useful in enhancing long-term recovery.

In conclusion, a clear way forwards that is focused on the protection of the human rights of these women is for the Australian government to ratify the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially women and children. This would send a clear message to the international community that this is an issue Australia takes seriously and for which there are very dire consequences for those who are involved in the operations of such a deplorable trade.

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