

Australia

Trafficking in women and girls (A/RES/73/146)

1. Measures to address trafficking in women and girls, as per resolution 73/146, including on the increased efforts to ensure prosecution of traffickers and improve protection of victims.

Australia is primarily a destination country for victims of human trafficking and modern slavery, including women and girls. The Australian Government recognises that human trafficking and modern slavery crimes disproportionately affect women and girls and is committed to addressing this issue.

Women and girls are trafficked into Australia, and within Australia, to be exploited in a range of industries including the sex industry and in domestic settings. Women and girls are also exploited in intimate and family relationships through forced marriage. In 2019, the Australian Federal Police received a total of 213 new referrals for human trafficking and modern slavery offences, including 93 referrals relating to forced marriage, 29 relating to sexual exploitation, and nine relating to domestic servitude.

National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery 2015-19

Australia's *National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery 2015-19* (Plan) provides a comprehensive, whole-of-government strategy to combat human trafficking and modern slavery. Since August 2018, the Australian Government has progressed a range of initiatives to strengthen prosecution outcomes, and enhance support and protection for women and girls. This includes:

- Strengthening criminal legislation by expanding the definition of forced marriage to explicitly capture marriages involving children under the age of 16 years;
- Establishing a dedicated forced marriage support stream under the Australian Government's Support for Trafficked People Program for people in, or at risk of, forced marriage;
- Funding anti-slavery non-government organisations in Australia working to prevent and deter human trafficking and modern slavery;
- Developing an [online resource](#) for victims and witnesses about the prosecution process, which is available in over 100 languages; and
- Delivering technical assistance and capacity building activities in partnership with governments in the Indo-Pacific to support strong law and policy frameworks to combat human trafficking and modern slavery and provide support and protection to victims.

Since August 2018, the Australian Government has also continued to strengthen implementation of existing measures under the Plan, including:

- Robust criminal offences for human trafficking and modern slavery crimes, with penalties of up to 25 years' imprisonment;
- Specialist Australian Federal Police teams to investigate human trafficking and modern slavery crimes;
- Vulnerable witness protections for victims and witnesses participating in the criminal justice process, including the option to give evidence by closed-circuit television, video-link or video recording;

- A dedicated Witness Assistance Service which provides assistance to witnesses and victims of Commonwealth crime delivered by dedicated staff with a background in social work;
- The Australian Government's Support for Trafficked People Program, which provides case management support, financial assistance, secure accommodation, medical treatment, counselling, social support and referral to legal and migration services; and
- A dedicated visa framework for victims of modern slavery and human trafficking.

To build on Australia's robust framework to combat modern slavery and human trafficking, the Australian Government is developing a new five-year *National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020-24*.

Complementing Australia's criminal justice response, the Australian Government is strengthening efforts to combat human trafficking and modern slavery in the supply chains of Australian goods and services. This includes implementing the *Modern Slavery Act 2018*, which requires over 3,000 businesses and other entities to report annually on their efforts to identify and address modern slavery risks in their global operations and supply chains.

2. Impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak in regards to trafficking in women and girls, and measures undertaken to address those in the short, medium and long-term, particularly in the following areas:

a. Impact on risks for trafficking in women and girls.

The health, social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic are exposing new and heightened risks of human trafficking and modern slavery. To respond to the impacts of COVID-19:

- In April 2020, the Australian Government announced additional funding for the Government's Support for Trafficked People Program to respond to challenges arising from COVID-19 providing effective support and protection to victims of human trafficking and modern slavery.
- The Australian Government's Operational Working Group on Human Trafficking and Slavery meets regularly to consider the impacts of COVID-19, and develop processes to ensure the Australian Government can continue to identify, support and protect victims.

b. Adaptation of service delivery to victims and survivors.

The Australian Government continues to fund the Support for Trafficked People Program to meet increasing demand and ensure all victims of human trafficking and slavery receive individually tailored case management support to meet their needs.

While referral of victims has remained consistent in the short term, restrictions implemented in response to the COVID-19 outbreak have affected access to usual services and social support. Additional funding and flexibility in program delivery have been provided in response including:

- Alternatives to face-to-face contact have been implemented where possible and where it's safe to do so;
- Support is being maintained where investigations and court proceedings are delayed;
- Mental health support has been increased; and
- Extended short term accommodation arrangements are being provided where required.