



# Tanya Plibersek MP



Minister for Housing  
Minister for the Status of Women

## **Australian Trafficking Forum**

University of Technology, Sydney

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Check against delivery

### **Acknowledgments**

- Ms. Elizabeth Broderick - Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
- Rev. Tim Costello – Chief Executive of World Vision Australia
- Jennifer Burn – director of the Anti-Slavery Project

### **Current situation in Australia**

- Thank you, Jennifer for your introduction.
- It's great to be here today to discuss this important issue.
- Trafficking is our modern equivalent of slavery.
- As you have already heard today, the role of my department is to coordinate the *Support for Victims of People Trafficking Program*, delivered in partnership with the Australian Federal Police, the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and the Attorney General's Department.
- Currently the program is tied to different visas, and is available to those who are identified as trafficked and who are both willing and able to assist with a trafficking investigation.
- I have asked my department to investigate opportunities to enhance the Support Program to ensure a more compassionate and responsive approach to support victims.
- I know you will have views on this Program, including the requirement that victims demonstrate they can assist with trafficking investigations in order to receive support through the Program.
- To date, the current majority of identified victims of trafficking have been women who work in the commercial sex industry; the majority have been helped by the Support Program.
- But both men and women have been trafficked. As you have heard here today, trafficking into the labour industry is a growing international concern that we are

preparing for here in Australia.

- We are all working together to anticipate and prevent the trafficking of children, and trafficking of organs.

### **Australian Institute of Criminology report**

- Monitoring Australia's progress in this area is absolutely vital to improving our response in the future.
- I would like to take this opportunity to announce the release of the Australian Institute of Criminology's report, *Australian criminal justice responses to trafficking of women for sexual purposes: Understanding current practices and the experience of agencies involved in that response*.
- This report was commissioned by my Office for Women.
- The research is intended to give some insight into some of the key issues we are facing, and some 'lessons learnt' over the last couple of years.
- Despite the seriousness of this issue, the overall picture has some cause for celebration.
- We don't know how many trafficking victims there are in Australia at any one time.
- On 1 July 2008, there were 34 people in the Support Program.
- Since the program started in 2004, 107 people have received support, including one male.
- Of the 107 clients, 65 per cent have been Thai nationals and 19 per cent have been South Korean.
- The male on the Support Program was trafficked into the hospitality industry.
- To date, there have not been any children on the Program.
- The research shows that victims are coming to official attention as a result of government activity and also because of individual women seeking help.
- The Australian Federal Police's Transnational Sexual Exploitation and Trafficking Teams have undertaken more than 150 investigations and assessments of trafficking allegations since January 2004.
- The report recommends a number of issues relating to Australia's response for further consideration; these suggestions are being considered by a number of departments.
- One of the recommendations made is that we reconceptualise or expand coverage of the visa framework to accommodate situations where victims of trafficking need help but do not want to talk to the police.
- I know that many of you have expressed this view also and it is an issue I have asked

Office for Women to explore with partner agencies.

- I am aware that the Department of Immigration and Citizenship has undertaken a Review of the visa framework and views expressed by stakeholders ranged from simplification, including more flexibility, of the visa framework to de-linking of visas from law enforcement activities.
- I know that the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, believes that there are opportunities to have a simpler and more flexible framework and is keen to further explore what can be done in this regard to that simplification.
- The report also recommends that a service standard be developed for the Support Program to allow effective performance monitoring.
- We are responding to this recommendation in our preparations for the upcoming tender process, and a service standard is being developed by the Office for Women in consultation with other partner agencies.
- There are also recommendations in the report regarding networking and information sharing among 'front line' workers and with NGOs.
- The Government's National Roundtable on People Trafficking convened by the Minister for Home Affairs, Bob Debus, that you have heard about today and which many of you are involved, is designed to open up the lines of communication between all of those working with victims of people trafficking.
- It will allow information and expertise to be shared so that the Government's Action Plan delivers the best possible outcomes for victims of trafficking.
- The report contains other recommendations that are relevant to the work of agencies partnering with the Office for Women on the Action Plan.
- Many people here may have been interviewed as part of this research and I would like to thank you for your time and considered views.
- The report will be available on the Australian Institute of Criminology's and Office for Women's websites and printed copies will be available soon.

## **The Rudd Government**

- The Government is committed to continuing to work using a whole-of-government approach to combat the issue of human trafficking.
- Representatives from the Office for Women, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, Australian Federal Police, and the Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions meet regularly to work out streamlining support offered to victims of trafficking.
- The Government is also committed to increasing its cooperation with community groups and non-government organisations to better identify victims and support them while in Australia.

- One of the outcomes of the recent roundtable was the establishment of a working group to develop guidelines for community and welfare groups working with trafficked persons.
- So far, feedback from the forum has been very positive.
- I think there is an important opportunity right now and it's great to see the momentum and optimism for change.
- I see the roundtable, the new working group and this forum as the beginning of a new era of Government working with the non-government sector.
- I am committed to ensuring victims of people trafficking receive appropriate and comprehensive assistance, and that the assistance is delivered in partnership with victims, and with respect.
- While the number of trafficking victims in Australia is still low, this is a very serious crime, and the Government is committed to continuing to implement improved measures to fight trafficking and support victims.
- Congratulations to the organisers of today's event for pulling together such an interesting array of speakers, on such an important issue.

ENDS

*For more information, please go [www.ofw.fahcsia.gov.au](http://www.ofw.fahcsia.gov.au).*