

Dear Friend of Project Respect,

Welcome to a Project Respect news update. If you would like to more information about Project Respect, Australia's foremost trafficking victim support agency, or to support Project Respect's work, you can do so [here](#).

## NEWS

On Wednesday 17th June, the Federal Government announced important reforms to its counter-trafficking strategy which will provide victims of trafficking with a more humanitarian model of support. These changes include improved access to permanent residency and support for all victims, not just those cooperating with police.

Project Respect has [consistently campaigned](#) for these reforms since 2002 and has supported survivors of trafficking to advocate for changes they believe will better prevent trafficking and protect other survivors. These women have met with MP's, public servants, researchers and the media to advocate for their rights and the rights of other trafficked women. Some of the women we support wrote a [moving and powerful statement](#) about their experiences, which has been distributed to politicians, media and the public. This statement was also quoted at length in Parliament when the reforms were introduced (page 81 of [Hansard](#)). These important reforms are a testament to the bravery and dedication of such survivors of trafficking.

The new changes allow all victims of trafficking permanent residency via the Witness Protection (Trafficking) visa, providing they cooperate with police and would be at risk if they were returned home. Previously, a significantly higher level of cooperation was required for this visa, such as agreeing to be a witness. Now, hopefully, a statement for the purpose of intelligent gathering should be sufficient. Victims may be reluctant to act as witnesses due to concerns for their own safety and that of their families; these changes acknowledge such concerns and ensure that all trafficked persons can have the security necessary to start to recover from the exploitation suffered in our country.

Another significant change is that all victims identified by the Australian Federal Police will be able to access the Federal Government support program, administered by the Red Cross, for at least 45 days. Previously only trafficked persons who were persons of interest to police or who were cooperating in an investigation or prosecution and who held a trafficking-victim visa could access the program. Beyond the 45 days, victims who are particularly traumatised can have another 45 days on the program. Those cooperating significantly with police will remain on the program while they continue to assist. This support program ensures an invaluable genuine reflection period, providing victims with the opportunity to make informed decisions about their future, to recover safely, and to access other organisations, like Project Respect for further support.

**These changes now make Australia one of the world leaders in support to victims of these grave human rights violation. It will make a real difference to the lives of survivors of trafficking.**

For more information see:

- [Australian Government media release on the reforms, June 17 2009](#)
- "So far, so good, but more can be done to end sex slavery," [The Age](#) and [The Brisbane Times](#), June 18
- [The Age, "Restrictions eased for sex trafficking victims," June 17](#)
- [The Australian, "Overhaul of human trafficking visas 'will help victims'," June 17](#)
- [Hansard, June 17, Minister for the Status of Women response to question about reforms, page 73 \(57\), and Minister for Home Affairs statement introducing reforms, page 79 \(63\)](#)