

GROUND-BREAKING PARLIAMENT REPORT LIFTS THE LID ON TRAFFICKING

Today after nine months of inquiry the Drugs and Crime Prevention Committee tabled a landmark report into people trafficking. This is the first time a State Parliament has investigated sex trafficking and provides an overall picture of trafficking in Victoria. The report is available here: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/dcpc/inquiries/sex%20trafficking/default.htm>

The importance of the report lies in its recognition of the need for a comprehensive and holistic response in order to combat trafficking and meet the needs of survivors of trafficking. The Committee has made broad recommendations including:

- the establishment of a **whole-of-government** Sex Industry Regulation, Policy and Coordination Unit in the Department of Justice (Chapter 16)
- **criminalisation** of intentionally, knowingly or recklessly **obtaining sexual services from trafficked women** (Chapter 16)
- **guaranteed access for nominated support agencies** to brothels, to support trafficked women and other women in the sex industry (chapter 12)
- more **training** for all agencies likely to encounter victims of trafficking (chapter 14)
- more **support services**, including exit programs and refuges (Chapter 15)

“The report's findings into trafficking people for prostitution are both welcome and groundbreaking,” says Nina Vallins, Executive Director of Project Respect, Australia's leading anti-trafficking and slavery organisation. “People trafficking is an egregious human rights abuse occurring right here in Melbourne.”

In 2009 Project Respect documented approximately 110 trafficked women in Victoria. Survivors of trafficking supported by Project Respect said, ***“What happened to us was a nightmare. We can never forget... It was like we were in jail – we had no free time, we couldn't go anywhere, we never had freedom. The traffickers treated us as slaves.”*** Women are forced to do prostitution to earn an extortionate amount of money for their traffickers, usually between \$35,000 and \$50,000. They are subjected to violence and their freedom of movement is usually severely curtailed.

“The Victorian Government has already shown strong leadership in funding Australia's first emergency accommodation and casework program and first community enterprise for survivors of trafficking. It is vital that the Government implement the Committee's recommendations to ensure a comprehensive and integrated response to survivors of sex trafficking in Victoria and the dismantling of trafficking networks,” says Ms Vallins.

Nina Vallins, Executive Director, is available for comment on 9416 3401.

PROJECT RESPECT

Project Respect was established in 1998 to work with women in the sex industry. We address violence against women in the sex industry, including trafficking for prostitution. Project Respect led the 2003 national campaign on trafficking for prostitution that resulted in the Federal Government's \$20 million package on trafficking, runs Australia's first shelter for victims of trafficking and is widely recognised as the leading Australian trafficking victim support agency.

Project Respect:

- Conducts daily outreach to brothels.
- Offers intensive counselling to women in the sex industry.
- Provides support to trafficked women in Victoria and New South Wales.
- Works closely with victim support, law enforcement and research agencies around Australia.
- Participates regularly in conferences and other forums.
- Publishes our own research on trafficking.
- Assists media, government staff and academics with research, law reform and policy development.