



Date: Thursday 19 December 2024

MEDIA RELEASE: ALARMING NEW REPORT FINDS 62% OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN AUSTRALIA FACE WORKPLACE ABUSE

The Migrant Workers Centre has released a new report revealing widespread abuse, underpayment, and unsafe working conditions among migrant workers in Australia. Despite ongoing advocacy efforts, the findings show that these issues remain deeply entrenched, affecting workers regardless of their visa status.

The report, ***Visa on arrival and migrant worker exploitation***, highlights several critical issues:

- **62%** of migrant workers report experiencing at least one form of workplace abuse, with **49%** experiencing discrimination, **30%** bullying, and **28%** verbal abuse. Racism is identified as a recurring workplace issue.
- **40%** of migrant workers report being underpaid, with **44%** of non-pathway arrivals being particularly vulnerable. Wage theft practices include the non-payment of superannuation (22%) and failure to provide payslips (18%).
- **34%** of workers have been injured at or due to work, with non-pathway arrivals facing increased pressure to work in hazardous conditions without proper training or safety equipment (18%).
- Many workers attempt to recover lost wages or seek workers' compensation without help. **43%** attempted wage recovery and **35%** pursued workers' compensation claims without consulting anyone, leading to significantly lower success rates.

The Migrant Workers Centre is calling for immediate action from State and Federal Governments to address these issues. The report includes the following key recommendations:

1. **Government-backed funding** to tackle workplace cultures that allow abuse, discrimination, and exploitation to persist. This should be integrated into broader occupational health and safety strategies, reducing the burden on migrant workers to report violations.
2. **Community-led education programs** that provide migrant workers with the information they need about their rights, both before and after arriving in Australia. These programs should be available in multiple languages and delivered at key community locations.
3. **Sustainable funding for legal services** that support migrant workers in wage recovery, workplace injury claims, and other legal issues. Community legal centres,



migrant worker organisations, and student legal services are essential but underfunded.

4. **Large-scale research** into workplace injuries among migrant workers to identify barriers to accessing workers' compensation schemes and develop effective solutions.

Quotes attributable to Matt Kunkel, CEO of the Migrant Workers Centre

"Our report reveals that workplace abuse and exploitation of migrant workers are not isolated incidents but systemic problems that affect more than half of this essential component of our workforce. This is a nationwide problem, and the numbers are only the tip of the iceberg. It's time for the government to act with urgency to protect the people who contribute so much to Australia's economy and society."

"Community organisations are at the frontlines of supporting migrant workers, but we are significantly underfunded. If we want to see real change, the government must invest in the capacity of these organisations to educate workers about their rights, provide legal support, and address exploitation effectively."

The full report, ***Visa on arrival and migrant worker exploitation***, is available for download on the Migrant Workers Centre's website.