



**MIGRANT  
WORKERS  
CENTRE**

# ANNUAL REPORT

**2024-2025**





The Migrant Workers Centre Ltd (MWC) is a not-for profit organisation open to any workers in Victoria who were born overseas. We connect migrant workers with one another and empower them to understand and enforce their rights.

The Migrant Workers Centre assists workers from emerging communities to address problems they encounter in workplaces and collaborates with unions and community partners to seek long-term solutions to the exploitation of migrant workers. We organise workshops, train community leaders, conduct research, develop policy recommendations, and bridge language barriers that limit workers' access to information. Our ultimate goal is to fix the problem of labour exploitation in this country.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Migrant Workers Centre respectfully acknowledges the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations, the traditional owners and custodians of this land on which we work. We pay our respects to their elders past and present and acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.



The Migrant Workers Centre is supported by the Victorian Government.



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# BOARD



**MARCUS CLAYTON**  
Chair

Head of Industrial Law at Labour law firm, Gordon Legal. Clayton is one of Australia's best-known union industrial lawyers. He has represented a range of unions and unionists in industrial litigation, two anti-union Royal Commissions, administrative law challenges, contempt of court cases and criminal prosecution.



**JENNI BLENCOWE**  
Secretary

Jenni has over 30 years of experience working in the area of migrant and refugee settlement and in asylum seeker programs with a focus on preparing new arrivals for work and social opportunities. Prior to retiring, Blencowe managed the Research and Policy Unit at AMES Australia.



**CYNDY CONNOLE**  
Chair of Finance Committee

Previously Partnerships Director at United Voice Union. Cyndy has also contributed to a range of networks, committees and boards over her career, including the Maribyrnong and Monee Valley Local Learning and Employment Network.



**SHANKAR KASYNATHAN**  
Deputy Chair

Manager in Advocacy and Policy at the Council to Homeless Persons, Lecturer on Community Development and Human Rights at Victoria University, and expert adviser to the Australian Human Rights Commission on anti-racism education.

Shankar has accumulated experiences in Youth Services, Housing, Public Health, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs across Victoria, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the ACT.



**AMANDA THRELFALL**  
Assistant Secretary,  
Victorian Trades Hall Council

Amanda directs strategy and campaigns across a wide breadth of industrial issues. Amanda previously worked as Senior Adviser for Tim Pallas MP, the Victorian Treasurer and Minister for Industrial Relations. Amanda has held leadership positions of Assistant Secretary and Vice President with the Industrial Relations Society of Victoria.



**SANMATI VERMA**  
Managing Lawyer,  
Human Rights Law Centre

Sanmati is an LIV accredited specialist in migration and is also an advisor to the United Workers Union and the deputy chair of the national Visa Cancellation Working Group. Sanmati's work has been recognised through the Law Institute of Victoria's 'Emerging Lawyer' award.



**COREY RABAUT**  
National Industrial Officer,  
Australian Services Union

Corey is passionate about social justice and thrives on campaigning alongside union members and community groups to achieve meaningful change. He strongly believes in the intersectionality of workers' rights and the unique challenges culturally and linguistically diverse communities face. Corey is committed to building inclusive and equitable workplaces that empower all workers to thrive, regardless of their background.



**PRIYANKA CHATTERJEE**  
Risk and Governance Expert,  
Telstra

Priyanka is an Indian woman of Bengali descent who migrated to Australia in 2013. She is an accomplished Risk and Governance leader and qualified Chartered Accountant, currently working for Telstra. Priyanka also has a strong commitment to the not-for-profit sector with volunteering experience at Teach for India and within her migrant community.



# CEO REPORT



**MATT KUNKEL**  
CEO

This year has been transformational for the MWC. The establishment of our new legal service enhances our ability to provide direct legal support to workers who have been underpaid, unfairly dismissed or exploited.

The MWC now provides free legal services to any migrant worker, regardless of their visa-type or location within Victoria.

In its first year, the new legal service is already delivering positive outcomes for migrant workers, including reinstatements and compensation for those wronged at work. Next year, the service will grow to a seven-member team, expanding our reach and capacity to defend workers' rights.

The MWC continues to play a key national role within the pilot programs for both the Workplace Justice Visa and Strengthening Reporting Protections. As accredited certifiers for these new measures, the MWC has supported migrant workers to have the confidence needed to report workplace wrong-doing and remain in Australia long enough to secure justice. These pilots are reshaping access to workplace justice for migrant workers. Throughout the coming year we will continue to advocate for improvements to these pilots alongside our union and civil society partners.

Workers can only enforce rights they know and understand. In 2024-25, our program of education and engagement reached more migrant workers than ever. We delivered 119 Know Your Rights sessions to 2,470 workers, with almost half run by our incredible Ambassadors. Our additional outreach and events connected with more than 11,000 people. Reflecting the deep trust migrant communities place in us, ten new ambassadors joined our program, representing Chinese, Fijian, Latin American, East African, Indian, Samoan and Burmese communities. Together, our 76 ambassadors, who speak 39 languages, extend into Victoria's regions, including new representation in Geelong, Robinvale and Mildura. Their leadership continues to bridge cultures and strengthen awareness of workplace rights across communities.

Through our partnership with Study Melbourne, our Right Start program continues to support international students to better understand their rights and navigate work with confidence. This year, 233 students received one-on-one consultations, while more than 10,000 international students took part in outreach and education activities. Participant feedback continues to show that these initiatives build confidence and empowerment, helping workers feel more informed and supported in their workplaces.

Research, advocacy and campaigning remain central to our strategy for long-term change. Throughout the year, we produced reports, policy briefs and submissions addressing key issues, from fair entitlements and workplace protections to visa and education reform. Our No Worker Left Behind petition, calling for the extension of the Fair Entitlements Guarantee to temporary visa holders, received strong support across community and union networks, amplifying our call for fairness for all workers. By combining worker stories with solid data and collective advocacy, the MWC continues to shape and drive real policy reform.



# SNAPSHOT OF DATA

## INDUSTRIAL CASEWORK



**119**

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information and referral services

**50**

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legal advice and legal tasks services

**10**

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ongoing support services

## EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT



**119**

Know Your Rights  
sessions delivered

**2,470**

attendees

**43**

delivered  
by Ambassadors

**19**

organised  
by Ambassadors

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**44**

outreach and  
engagement events

**11,039**

attendees

**7**

delivered  
by Ambassadors

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**10**

capacity building  
sessions delivered

**238**

attendees

## TOTAL WORKERS AND TOTAL RECOVERED:



This year we helped over **200** workers resolve industrial disputes, recovering **\$57,205** in wages and entitlements. Since the launch of the MWC, we have recovered **\$2,298,437.00** in wages and entitlements.

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### INTAKES



**213** enquiries  
from  
**209** unique service users

### MEDIA MENTIONS



**8**  
media mentions since  
**July 2024**, including:  
SBS, ABC, 3CR and Choice

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### RESEARCH, POLICY AND CAMPAIGNS



**2** research reports  
**3** webinars  
with **143** participants

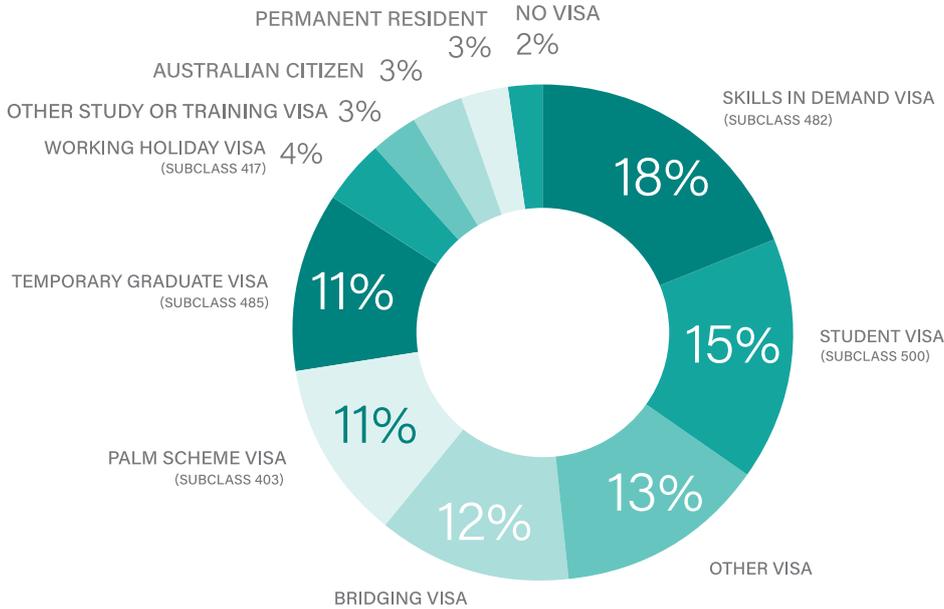
### POLICY SUBMISSIONS



**3**  
policy submissions sent to  
Parliament addressing migrant  
exploitation and recommendations  
to address this

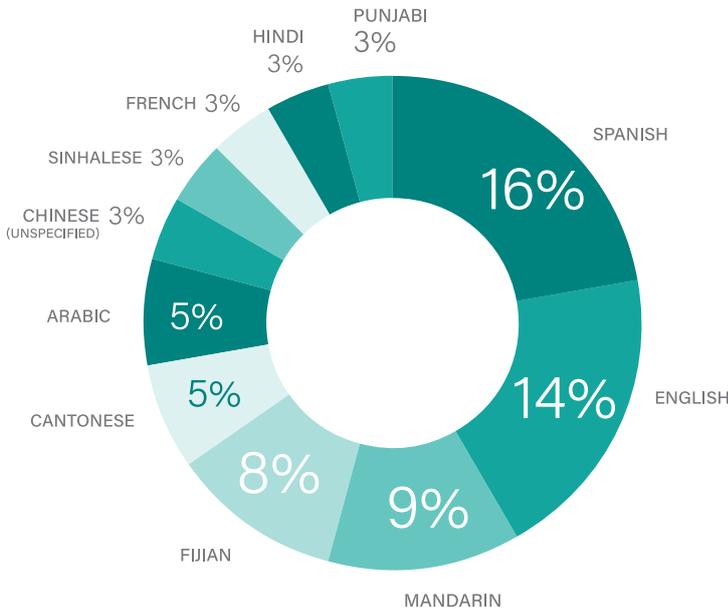


# WORKERS DEMOGRAPHICS



## MIGRATION STATUS

The majority of workers supported by the Centre held temporary visas, with the Skills in Demand visa (subclass 482) being the most common at 18%. This was followed by Student visas (15%), other visa types (13%), and Bridging visas (12%). Workers on PALM scheme visas (11%) and Temporary Graduate visas (11%) also made up a significant portion of those seeking assistance. Smaller proportions of cases involved Working Holiday makers (4%), Australian citizens (3%), permanent residents (3%), and those on other study or training visas (3%). A small number of workers reported having no visa status (2%).

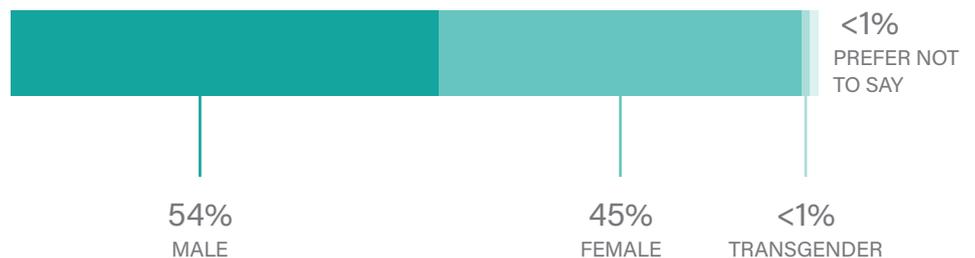


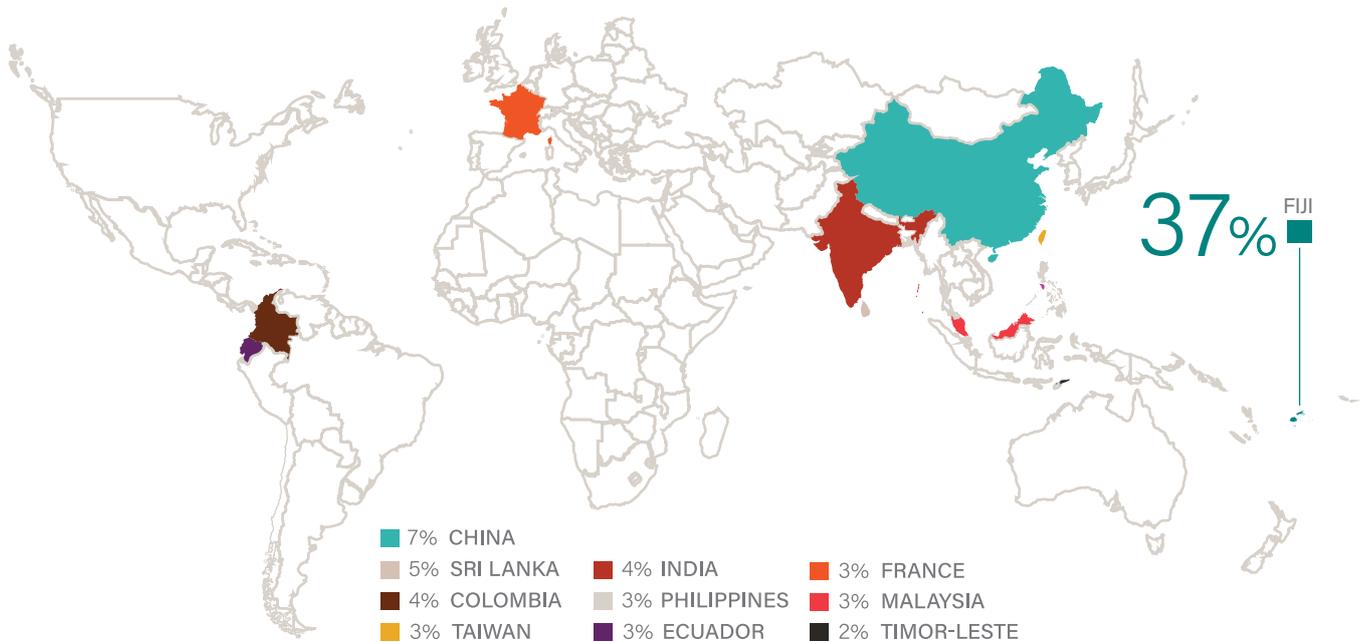
## LANGUAGE

Workers who sought support from the Centre spoke a wide range of languages, reflecting the diversity of migrant communities in Victoria. Spanish was the most common language spoken (16%), followed by English (14%), Mandarin (9%) and Fijian (8%). Other frequently spoken languages included Cantonese and Arabic (5% each). Smaller proportions of workers spoke Chinese (unspecified), Sinhalese, French, Hindi, or Punjabi (3% each).

## GENDER

Slightly more than half of the workers supported by the Centre identified as male (54%), while 45% identified as female. Fewer than 1% of workers identified as transgender or preferred not to disclose their gender.

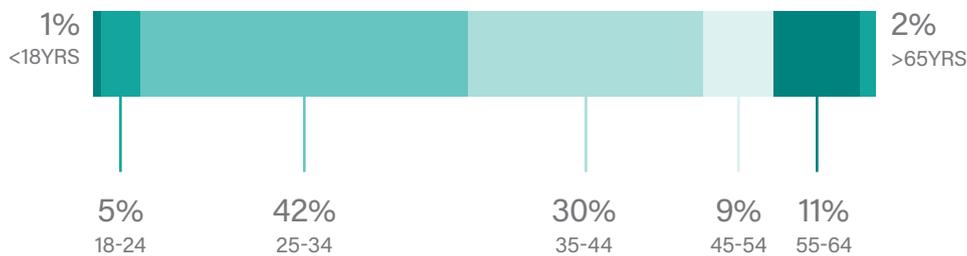




## WORKERS BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Workers supported by the Centre came from a broad range of countries and regions, reflecting the diversity of Victoria's migrant workforce. The largest group of workers originated from Fiji (37%), followed by China (7%), Sri Lanka (5%), Colombia (4%) and India (4%). Smaller groups came from the Philippines, Taiwan,

Ecuador, France, and Malaysia (3% each), with additional representation from Timor-Leste, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Chile. Collectively, workers from Asia accounted for 43% of cases, followed by Oceania (39%), the Americas (11%), Europe (5%), and Africa (2%).

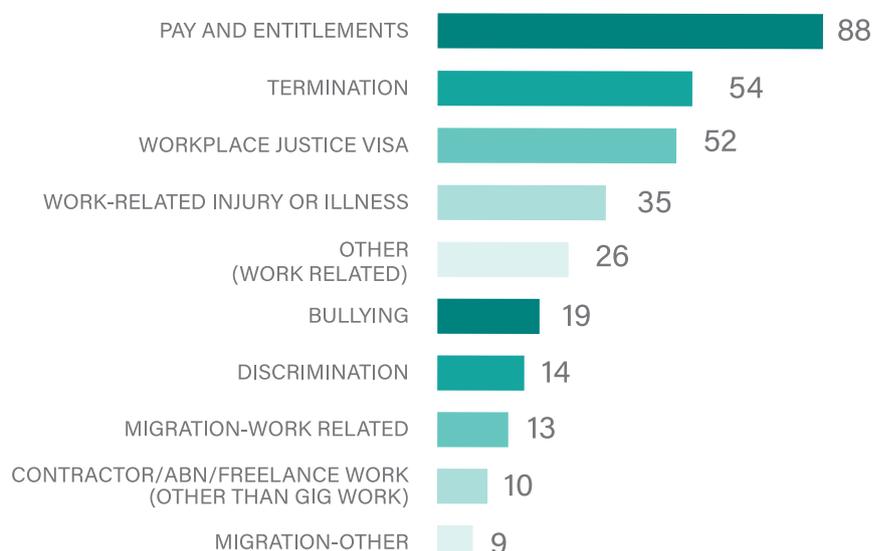


## AGE

Most workers supported by the Centre were young adults, with 42% aged between 25 and 34 years and 30% aged between 35 and 44 years. A further 11% were aged 55 to 64, while 9% were aged 45 to 54. Younger workers aged 18 to 24 represented 5% of cases, and only a small proportion were under 18 (1%) or over 65 (2%).

## WORKPLACE ISSUES REPORTED

As in previous years, wage theft and underpayment remained the most common workplace issue, accounting for 88 cases. Termination (54 cases) and Workplace Justice Visa matters (52 cases) were also frequently raised. Other common concerns included work-related injury or illness (35 cases) and general work-related matters (26 cases). Additional issues such as bullying (19 cases), discrimination (14 cases), and contractor or freelance work arrangements (10 cases) were also reported, alongside migration related enquiries (22 cases in total).





## CASE STUDY ONE

# GRACE

Grace came to Australia from China in November 2018 on a student visa, eager to study and experience life abroad. Drawn by Australia's multicultural diversity and strong reputation for education, she saw it as a relatively easy path to migrate. With friends who had arrived before her, Grace felt she had a good sense of what to expect. However, her understanding of working conditions was limited.

Like many international students, Grace was keen to find work once she arrived. She secured a role at a daycare centre during her placement training between 2019 and 2020. During the recruitment process, she was informed about superannuation but was never provided the necessary paperwork. As a result, her employer did not pay her superannuation, a mandatory entitlement for workers in Australia.

It wasn't until she started a second daycare job that she realised something was wrong. During onboarding, her new employer explained superannuation, prompting Grace to question why she hadn't been paid this in her previous role. When she confronted her first employer, they reluctantly provided a lump sum payment however it only covered two months of work, despite her having worked there for a full year.

At the time, Grace didn't know she had the right to pursue the unpaid superannuation further. She also struggled to read her payslips properly,

which she says is a common issue for international students and migrant workers unfamiliar with the information provided on the payslip.

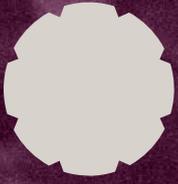
After seeking advice from her union, Grace was told they couldn't provide legal support since she wasn't a member at the time. However, through her connection with the Migrant Workers Centre, Grace learned she was entitled to take further action regarding the superannuation owed to her. This experience has made her more vigilant in reading contracts and understanding her workplace rights.

Grace's story is a powerful reminder of the challenges many migrant workers face, particularly around basic entitlements like superannuation.

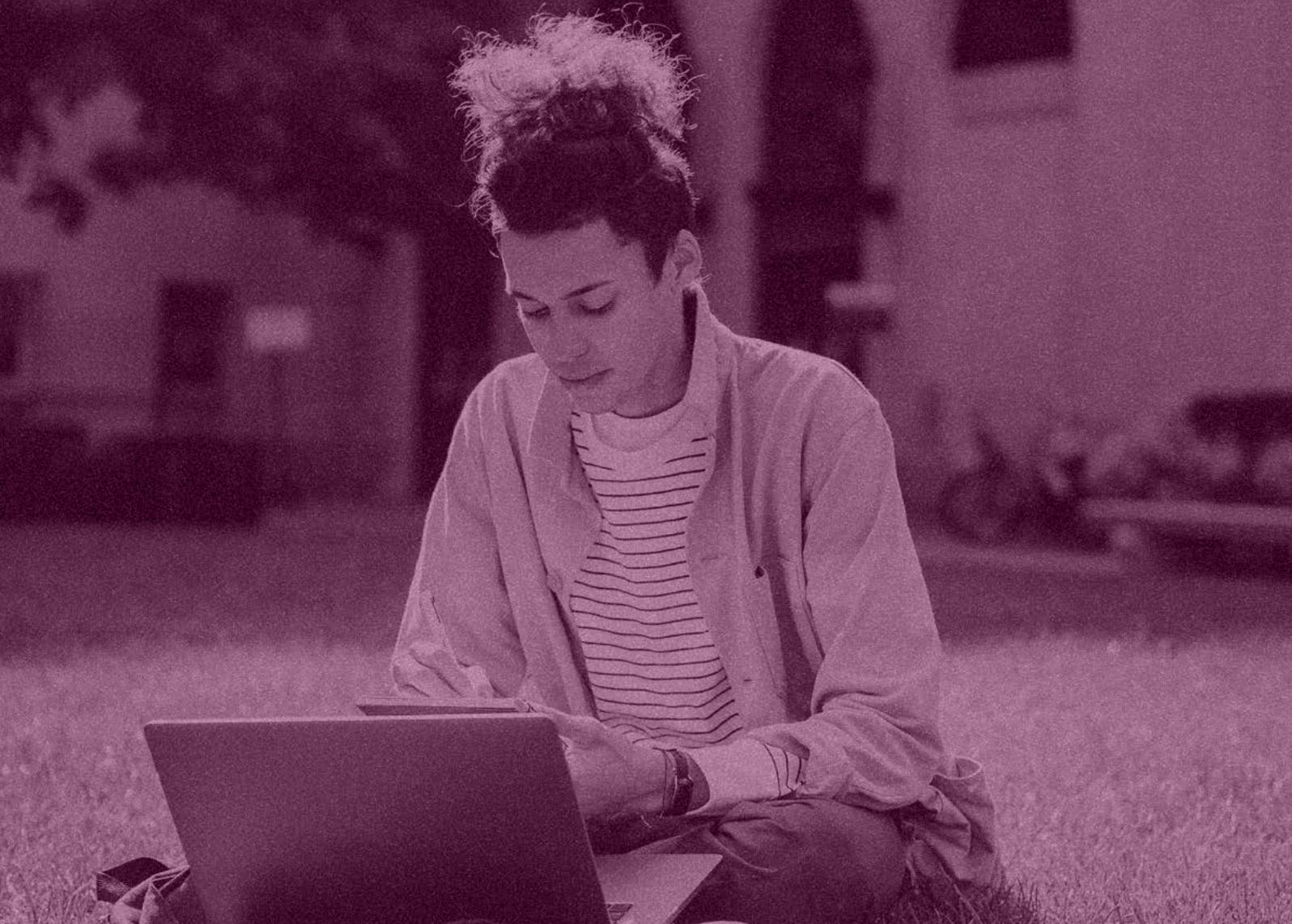
Without the right information or support, it's easy for workers to be left in the dark about their rights and for employers to take advantage of this.

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"I knew it was wrong to be paid cash in hand, but I was scared to lose my job during the pandemic"



# LEGAL SERVICE



Providing case work support to individual workers suffering exploitation at work represents the first of the MWC's three pillars. This service interacts dynamically with our Education and Empowerment and our Research and Policy pillars.

In 2024 – 2025 an important change to our operating model was implemented, further enhancing our capacity to provide expert advice and support to individual migrant workers. The MWC became an accredited Community Legal Centre commencing services in July 2024 and heralding a major development in the evolution of the MWC.

This new service will provide a very sound base on which to continue to expand our expertise and capacity to enforce workplace rights for individuals. The service provides free legal advice and casework to migrant workers. A Principal Lawyer and an Employment Lawyer were appointed to implement and oversee the work of this new service. The legal team provided assistance to vulnerable workers, including workers on visas under the PALM scheme, who had been underpaid, unlawfully dismissed, and subjected to workplace discrimination, and successfully obtained compensation and reinstatement for their clients.

In a further expansion to strengthen our case work services, the MWC became an Accredited Third Party for the Workplace Justice Visa and the Strengthening Reporting Pilots. This service follows on from the significant leading role undertaken by the MWC in collaboration with unions, academics and civil society in 2023 – 2024 to achieve the passing of the Migration Amendment (Strengthening Employer Compliance) Bill.

The Pilots enable migrant workers who have been exploited at work to remain in Australia to pursue a workplace justice activity. In this role, the MWC assisted workers who had been victims of workplace injuries, underpayment, and sexual harassment in seeking and obtaining workplace justice, when they would have otherwise been unable to do so due to their visa conditions or expiry.

In its second year of operation, the MWC Legal Service will expand to become a team of seven members, including a Principal Lawyer, two Employment Lawyers, a Migration Lawyer, a Legal Administrator, and two dedicated Intake Officers.

This expansion will enable the legal team to further its mission to provide accessible, relevant, and practical advice and representation, allowing migrant workers to realise their workplace rights.

## TESTIMONIES



### JENNY

\*Jenny worked as a cook in a café. The employer had explained to Jenny that she was an independent contractor. She was not paid according to the relevant award. She sought advice from the MWC.

The legal team assisted Jenny with writing a letter of demand to her former employer requesting payment of her employee entitlements, including superannuation. The Migrant Workers Centre assisted the client with recovering around \$4,200 of entitlements (before tax withholding) and around \$1,200 in superannuation.

### BELINDA

\*Belinda had been working as an assistant at a takeaway café when she realised, she was being underpaid. Unsure of what to do, she reached out to the Migrant Workers Centre for advice about her hourly, penalty, and overtime rates. Through the legal service, Belinda received guidance on how to address the issue and support to write a letter of demand to her former employer. We then negotiated with the employer's legal representatives, reaching a settlement that resolved her case and ensured she was fairly compensated for her work.

\*names have been changed.



## CASE STUDY TWO

# SUGA

Suga moved from Malaysia to Australia in 2019, full of hope. She completed a Diploma in Early Childhood Education and began her career in childcare, driven by a passion for working with children. At first, everything went well and the training was valuable, the families were welcoming, and she felt she was building a meaningful future in a country where childcare is highly respected.

Her situation changed when her employer promised visa sponsorship, a commitment that was never fulfilled. After more than a year with the company, she learned through another branch that they did not offer sponsorship.

As uncertainty grew, Suga experienced bullying, false allegations, and intimidation at work, including threats to call the police before being dismissed without understanding her workplace rights.

Under significant stress and while supporting her retired parents and siblings overseas, Suga sought help from the Migrant Workers Centre. "The moment I spoke to someone at MWC, I felt heard and respected," she says. Through our legal service, she received support from our Principal Lawyer and was guided through the

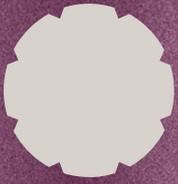
process of taking action against her former employer. Suga was eligible for the Workplace Justice Visa, a pilot program that enables migrant workers to remain in Australia while pursuing justice through the Fair Work Commission. "The visa gave me a chance to tell my story and seek justice," she recalls. With MWC's assistance, she filed her case and was successful at the Fair Work Commission.

Today, Suga works in childcare and actively supports other migrant workers. Her experience demonstrates how access to legal representation and the Workplace Justice Visa can empower migrant workers to seek justice and create safer, fairer workplaces.

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**“The moment  
I spoke to someone  
at MWC, I felt heard  
and respected”**





# EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

Our Know Your Rights at Work sessions continue to play an important role in helping migrant workers and international students understand their work rights.

This year, we delivered 119 sessions, reaching 2,490 participants across Victoria. Ambassadors played an active role, delivering 43 sessions and organising 19 events within their own communities. Sessions were offered in 10 languages, including Mandarin, Arabic, Spanish and Filipino, in partnership with organisations such as Melbourne Polytechnic, SisterWorks, Box Hill Institute, Chisholm Institute and The Couch International Student Centre.

Feedback collected after each session showed that participants felt more confident understanding their workplace rights and knew how to get help if something went wrong. These results highlight the impact of our KYR sessions and the ongoing need for accessible information that helps workers understand their rights and feel empowered at work.

THIS YEAR

13,500

+ people reached

119

sessions delivered

10

languages delivered across Victoria

SURVEY RESULTS SHOW

95%

confident that attendees understood their workplace rights in Australia

94%

know how to get help if they encounter any issues at work.

## BICULTURAL WORK RIGHTS AMBASSADORS' PROGRAM



The Bicultural Work Rights Ambassadors' Program trains and supports community leaders to share practical information about workplace rights and safety within their own communities.

After completing the training, Ambassadors organise, promote and deliver sessions in their own languages, drawing on their cultural knowledge and community networks to build connections, strengthen awareness and empower workers.

In 2024–25, ten new Ambassadors joined the program, representing Chinese, Fijian, Latin American, East African, Indian, Samoan and Burmese communities. We now have 76 Ambassadors across Victoria who collectively speak 39 languages. This year also saw stronger regional representation, with Ambassadors now based in Geelong, Robinvale, and Mildura. Through events, advocacy and outreach, Ambassadors help bridge the gap between migrant communities and available support services, making information about workplace rights more accessible across the state.

### TESTIMONIES



#### MAOJING

"The BWRAP and work as a BA gave me the chance to empower me with more of the work and workplace knowledge that I have been interested in.

They also have given me the opportunity to bring this knowledge back to my community, as paid work. I have had the chance to reach to different partners and seek cooperation in many ways and build relationships. With the provided materials and what was taught in the training and boost sessions, I have had the chances to present and deliver such holistic and structured important work rights and safety knowledge to people in language I and they are the most familiar with.

I love having quality conversations with community members in the process of planning and delivering the sessions."



#### SAR PEE

"Being a BWRAP ambassador has been a meaningful and eye-opening journey for me. This role gave me the opportunity not only to share information but also to listen and connect with people on a deeper level.

Through the sessions, I've learned how important it is to create safe spaces where participants feel comfortable to open up and share their own stories. That exchange of trust has been one of the most rewarding aspects of the work."

## STUDY MELBOURNE INCLUSION PROGRAM



The Study Melbourne Inclusion Program (SMIP) supports international students and temporary visa holders to understand their workplace rights and feel more confident navigating work in Australia. Through one-on-one consultations, workshops and events, the program provides practical information, guidance and access to support.

International students were actively involved in the planning and delivery of activities through the Project Committee and Reference Group, ensuring the program reflected their experiences and needs.

Developed by the Migrant Workers Centre in collaboration with LLAMA and supported by Study Melbourne, SMIP continues to raise awareness of workplace rights and build connections in Victoria's international student community.

### TESTIMONIES



**ANDRES TREVINO**  
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT WORKER

"The Right Start program helps international students in Victoria build employability skills and understand their workplace rights. Many arrive unsure about things like superannuation, penalty rates, or the difference between a TFN and an ABN.

After our sessions, students feel more confident applying for jobs and relieved to have personalised guidance that recognises their individual experiences. My hope is that every student walks away knowing their rights and how to present themselves with confidence."



**LUCAS**  
RIGHT START PARTICIPANT

"When I first arrived in Australia, I needed a job but didn't know where to start or how my skills would fit the local market. After meeting with Andres at the Study Melbourne Hub, I became more aware of my strengths and how the job market works here.

I've learned how to improve my resume to what employers are really looking for and to feel confident knowing my rights at work and where to turn for help. There are people out there who truly care about supporting international students, and this program is proof of that."

## CONSULTATION SERVICE



Through our one-on-one consultations, the Right Start program continued to provide tailored employment advice, screen for potential workplace exploitation and build awareness of workplace rights among international students in Victoria.

Over the reporting period, 508 consultation slots were made available, with 233 international students receiving personalised guidance and support. An additional 28 temporary visa holders were also assisted, extending the program's reach beyond its formal eligibility criteria.

Feedback collected through post-consultation forms and participant surveys showed that students left feeling more confident about applying for jobs, aware of their rights and empowered to take the next steps in their employment journey. Consultations were delivered continuously throughout the project period to 30 June 2025.

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## OUTREACH AND EDUCATION EVENTS

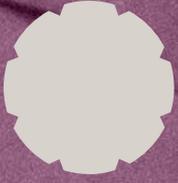


Right Start also expanded its impact through a series of outreach and education activities designed to raise awareness of workplace rights and improve students' confidence in the Australian job market.

Across the year, the program delivered 35 Know Your Rights at Work sessions, reaching more than 850 students. In addition, 31 outreach activities including O-Week events, guest presentations and collaborations with education providers engaged a further 9,186 international students. The program also hosted a capacity-building session, equipping 15 student volunteers with the skills to support their peers.

In total, **10,051** international students took part in Right Start's education and outreach initiatives. Post-event forms and optional feedback surveys indicated strong engagement and growing awareness of workplace rights. Activities were delivered throughout the project period to 30 June 2025.





# RESEARCH AND POLICY

**In 2024 - 2025** the Migrant Workers Centre advanced its research and policy work through new studies, surveys and submissions that highlight the realities of migrant work in Australia and inform policy change.

We partnered with the Migrant Justice Institute (MJI) to deliver the National Temporary Migrant Worker Survey, focusing on issues such as wage theft, modern slavery indicators, and workplace injury. The survey received over 10,000 responses, with reports scheduled for release in the coming year.

Our team also developed reports, policy briefs, and submissions addressing structural issues in Australia's labour and migration systems, including fair entitlements, workplace protections and education and visa policy reform.

## CARROT OR STICK

The Migrant Workers Centre released **Carrot or Stick**, a research report examining the challenges international students face within Australia's education and migration systems.

The study reveals how current policies often prioritise economic outcomes over student wellbeing and future opportunities. Drawing on 25 in-depth interviews with current and former international students, the report calls for reforms that align education pathways with genuine migration prospects and provide stronger protections against exploitation and financial hardship, ensuring a more ethical and sustainable international education system.



### KEY ISSUES ADDRESSED:



1. **Unclear Residency Pathways:** International students are often caught in a cycle of visa renewals and additional course enrolments, hindering their academic and professional aspirations.
2. **Financial Pressures:** The burden of high tuition fees and visa-related costs shifts the focus from learning to meeting migration criteria, raising concerns about the true beneficiaries of the international education system.
3. **Labor Market Exploitation:** Many international students face exploitation in the workforce, exacerbated by restrictive visa conditions and a lack of social safety nets.
4. **Need for Integrated Policy Reform:** The report highlights the need for coordinated policy changes that better address the aspirations of international students and align them with Australia's skilled migration needs.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:



1. **Align Education with Migration Pathways:** Ensure that courses and programs offered to international students are closely coordinated with Australia's skilled migration program, particularly in areas experiencing skills shortages.
2. **National Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Framework:** Develop a framework that integrates practical work experience with academic learning, enhancing students' employability post-graduation.
3. **Legislative Protections for Students:** Enforce compliance obligations that require education providers to offer robust career development, wellbeing support and work rights education for international students.
4. **Access to Legal Support:** Increase funding for community-based legal and migration advice services to ensure international students can access justice.
5. **Anti-Discrimination Laws:** Amend federal and state laws to prohibit discrimination against international students and temporary migrant workers based on their visa status.
6. **Pathway to Residency:** Introduce a one-time pathway to residency for temporary workers who supported the Australian economy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## VISA ON ARRIVAL AND MIGRANT WORKER EXPLOITATION

This report explores how visa status shapes the experiences of migrant workers in Australia and their exposure to exploitation. Based on 959 survey responses and 24 in-depth interviews, it examines how the type of visa affects workers' job security, confidence to speak up, and access to fair conditions.

The findings show that those on short-term or non-pathway visas are more likely to experience underpayment, discrimination, and unsafe work environments, highlighting the need for stronger protections and clearer pathways to permanency.



### KEY FINDINGS:



62% of migrant workers experience at least one form of workplace abuse, including discrimination (49%), bullying (30%), and verbal abuse (28%). Racism is identified as a significant psychosocial hazard.

40% report underpayment, with 44% of non-pathway arrivals facing wage theft practices such as the non-payment of superannuation (22%) or lack of payslips (18%).

34% report workplace injury, with non-pathway arrivals facing increased pressure to work in hazardous conditions without proper training or safety measures (18%).

Many migrant workers do not seek support, with 43% attempting wage recovery and 35% seeking workers' compensation without consulting anyone, leading to lower success rates.

### RECOMMENDATIONS:



1. Government-backed funding to shift workplace cultures that perpetuate abuse, racism, and exploitation. This includes stronger protections within broader occupational health and safety strategies to relieve the reporting process from migrant workers.
2. Capacity-building programs delivered by community organisations to empower migrant workers with knowledge of their rights, both pre- and post-arrival, with information available in multiple languages across key community settings.
3. Sustainable legal assistance funding to support community legal centres and migrant worker organisations that offer tailored legal services to address the overwhelming demand for assistance with wage recovery, workplace injury claims, and more.
4. Comprehensive research into workplace injuries among migrant workers, identifying barriers to accessing workers' compensation schemes and improving protections.

## POLICY BRIEFS



In 2024–25, the Migrant Workers Centre published two policy briefs focused on reinforcing worker protections and visa reform.

### Expanding the Fair Entitlements Guarantee (February 2025)

called for the expansion of the Fair Entitlements Guarantee (FEG) to temporary visa holders and for additional reforms to ensure workers affected by employer insolvency or illegal phoenix activity can recover their entitlements.

### In Review: Australia's Visa Protection Pilots (June 2025)

assessed the Workplace Justice Visa and Strengthening Reporting Protections pilots in their first year of operation, highlighting their importance in allowing migrant workers to report exploitation and hold their employers accountable. The brief evidenced the need to make the pilots permanent, and also made recommendations to improve access and implementation.

## WEBINARS



Our webinar series, launched in 2024, has strengthened our networks, provided a platform to showcase new research, and created opportunities to invite and highlight emerging scholars.

### 28 August (48 attendees) - Launch of Carrot or Stick report

- Sherry Huang (MWC): Presentation on Carrot or Stick
- Laurie Berg (Migrant Justice Institute): Overview of research and advocacy leading to the Workplace Justice Visa

### 20 November (40 attendees) - Modern Slavery Risks for Temporary Migrant Workers in Regional NSW and Victoria

- Sophia Kagan (Office of the NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner): Be Our Guests report presentation
- Carla Chung (Australian Catholic Religious Against the Trafficking of Humans): Work with PALM Scheme workers

### 18 June (55 attendees) - PhD and Early Career Researcher Showcase

- Emily Foley (Flinders University, University of Canberra, La Trobe University): Research on temporary labour migration policy shifts
- Ema Moolchand (RMIT): Research on PALM Scheme workers in the meat-processing sector

## E-DIGEST



The Migrant Worker Research Quarterly, launched in 2024, shares updates from the MWC's Research and Policy team, news on upcoming conferences and webinars, and concise summaries of recent reports and articles relevant to migrant workers.

Four editions were published during 2024-2025



Winter 2024



Spring 2024



Summer 2025



Autumn 2025

*The newsletter helps maintain engagement with researchers, advocates, and policymakers, and fosters collaboration across the sector.*

## POLICY SUBMISSIONS



We contributed to three major policy consultations focused on improving workplace protections, gender equity, and fair treatment for migrant workers.

- Restricting Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs) in Workplace Sexual Harassment Cases (September 2024)
- Workplace Gender Equality Amendment (Setting Gender Equality Targets) Bill (December 2024)
- Addressing Corporate Misuse of the Fair Entitlements Guarantee (March 2025)



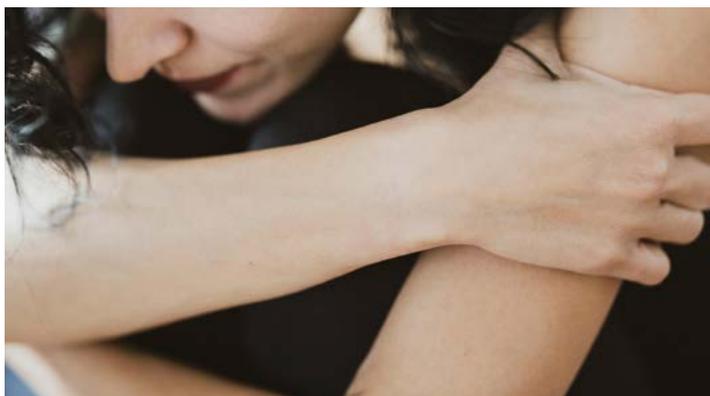
# NO WORKER LEFT BEHIND



**No Worker Left Behind – Fair Entitlements for All Workers** was our petition, launched to call on the Federal Government to extend the Fair Entitlements Guarantee (FEG) to temporary visa holders, include unpaid superannuation, and close loopholes that allow employers to evade their responsibilities.

The petition received 361 signatures and was shared across community and union networks, helping build public awareness and support for fair entitlements for all workers in Australia.

## THE COLLAPSE OF A NATIONAL EDUCATION PROVIDER LEFT MIGRANT WORKERS STRANDED AND UNPAID.



When an international education provider abruptly shut down in December 2023, dozens of migrant workers across Australia lost their jobs, income and, for many, their right to remain in the country. The closure affected staff across campuses in Darwin, Adelaide, and the Gold Coast, many of whom were on temporary or sponsored visas.

Despite repeated reassurances that a buyer had been found and their jobs were secure; employees were blindsided by the company's collapse. Overnight, they were left without notice, pay, or access to the federal Fair Entitlements Guarantee (FEG)—a safety net that excludes temporary visa holders.

### TESTIMONIES



\*All names have been changed for privacy.

#### SARA, Darwin

##### **"I had to move interstate just to stay in the country."**

Sara came to Darwin in early 2023 on a scholarship to study at an international college and worked part-time in student services. When the company went into administration, she lost her job without notice and discovered she was owed over \$10,000 in unpaid wages and entitlements. As a temporary visa holder, she was ineligible for the FEG.

#### DARIA, Gold Coast

##### **"I was a sponsored worker - and I still got nothing."**

Daria, an experienced English teacher from Argentina, worked under a sponsorship visa at the Gold Coast campus. After the closure, she lost her job and visa status and was left owed more than \$40,000. Her FEG application was denied because of her visa type, leaving her future in Australia uncertain.

#### GEORGIA, Adelaide

##### **"We were told everything was fine - and then it was over."**

Georgia, another English teacher from Argentina, had been with the college for 18 months when management reassured staff that a buyer had been found. Days later, she and her colleagues were terminated without warning. Many, including those on sponsorship visas, were left unpaid and ineligible for the FEG.



## CASE STUDY THREE

# JISAN

Jisan came to Australia from Nepal after completing his cookery studies and remained in the country on a COVID visa (subclass 408). Through his nephew, he found work as a chef in Sunbury. For two years, he worked long 46-hour weeks without overtime, holding onto his employer's promise of visa sponsorship.

Over time, cracks began to show. Pay became irregular, and staff were repeatedly reassured that things would improve. In 2023, Jisan arrived for work to find the restaurant locked with an eviction notice on the door. The owner had disappeared and cut off all communication, leaving him with \$8,000 in unpaid wages, no superannuation, and a \$4,000 tax debt from unreported contributions. While his Australian colleagues were able to access Fair Entitlements Guarantee (FEG) support, Jisan was excluded.

*"I felt very bad. I pay taxes like everyone else, but because I'm a temporary worker, I don't get the same help,"* he explains.

The stress of the situation took a heavy toll. With only two kitchen staff remaining, Jisan worked exhausting 12-hour shifts in the restaurant's final months, feeling trapped by the hope of sponsorship.

When the business collapsed, he relied on his savings for two months before finding new work. Jisan's experience highlights the systemic barriers faced by migrant workers.

Throughout his final year, he was expected to document unpaid shifts and chase his wages on his own, efforts that were rarely honoured.

*"It was a frustrating time for me,"* he recalls.

His story reveals how Australia's migration system continues to leave temporary visa holders vulnerable. Without access to protections like the FEG, losing a job can have devastating financial and emotional consequences, especially amid the rising cost of living and housing pressures.

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**“I felt very bad. I pay taxes like everyone else, but because I’m a temporary worker, I don’t get the same help”**



# YEAR IN REVIEW







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