



# ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023





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## *The Migrant Workers Centre*

The Migrant Workers Centre Inc (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 system of labour exploitation in this country.

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## *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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# Committee members



## 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.



## Sanmati Verma

Managing Lawyer, Human Rights Law Centre. Sanmati is a 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.



## Amanda Threlfall

Assistant Secretary of 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.



## Anthony Forsyth

### Committee member until May 2023

Anthony is a Distinguished Professor in the Graduate School of Business & Law at RMIT University. His research focuses on collective bargaining, trade unions, union education, labour hire and the gig economy. Anthony is President of the Australian Labour Law Association and runs the "Labour Law Down Under" blog.



## Zeynep Yesilyurt

### Committee member until June 2023

Zeynep has worked as a researcher, community development worker and social worker in a range of non-profit organisations in Australia for over 25 years. She has a strong interest in human rights and social justice issues, with a particular focus on women and multicultural communities.



## Shankar Kasynathan

### Deputy Chair

Adjunct Senior Research Fellow at the National Centre for Reconciliation, Truth and Justice and a former Commissioner of Multicultural Affairs.

Shankar has accumulated experiences in Youth Services, Housing, Public Health, Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs across Victoria, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the ACT. Shankar has also been an adviser to State and Territory members of parliament.



## Jenni Blencowe

### Secretary

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



## Cyndy Connole

### Treasurer

A founding member of the Migrant Workers Centre Inc. Former Partnerships Director at United Voice Union. Former Treasurer and President at Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley Local Learning and Employment Network.

# CEO's report

This year the Migrant Workers Centre celebrates its fifth birthday. Since opening in 2018, we have assisted thousands of migrant workers to better understand their workplace rights and helped them recover more than two million dollars in unpaid wages and entitlements. This past year has been our biggest year to date. The MWC has delivered more workplace-rights education sessions and directly supported more workers than any before.

Thank-you to all the community groups and educational institutions who have recognised the importance of rights-education and partnered with us to spread this important information.

Over the past five years, we have seen slow but consistent progress in breaking down the barriers workers face at the intersection of our migration and industrial systems. Yet migrant workers remain at the centre of this nation's wage theft epidemic.

Our research report *Insecure By Design*, released this year, showed that a majority (58%) of migrant workers had experienced or were experiencing wage theft. While stronger laws are needed to deter wage theft, we must urgently improve migrant workers' access to our justice system.

This year has seen many positive developments. A new visa type allowing migrant workers to remain in Australia while they pursue action for workplace claims is in its final stages of development. Coupled with improved whistleblower protections currently before Parliament, this visa will assist more migrant workers recover stolen wages and hold unscrupulous employers to account. The Migrant Workers Centre has been calling for these reforms since we opened. We have not been alone in this struggle and acknowledge the strong advocacy of unions, academics and civil society in achieving these meaningful steps forward.

Another barrier the MWC identified early in 2018 and has been at the centre of our advocacy, is the nation's obsession for temporary rather than permanent visas. It is a core contributor to poor workplace outcomes for migrants, who face not only job insecurity but visa precarity. Removing this precarity is an essential precursor to improving the lives of migrant workers. Our *Unlocking Talent* report, released in conjunction with Unions NSW, showed more than a third of temporary visa holders had been denied job opportunities because of their visa. A further 39% reported having been paid or offered lower salaries because of their temporary status. More than half reported difficulties in having their skills recognised, denying them the ability to earn a living.

Addressing discriminatory practices and improving pathways to permanence will remain central to our policy advocacy this year. I want to acknowledge all the workers who helped achieve these wins by courageously sharing their stories. Centring the voice and ambition of migrant workers will always be central to our work.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of all those who have helped the MWC over our first five years. I am fortunate to work with a team of passionate staff, ambassadors, volunteers and activists, whose commitment to building a better world holds the promise of continued success in the years to come.

*Matt Kunkel,*  
CEO





# Snapshot 2022-23

## Industrial casework: direct support for migrant workers



## Education and Empowerment



## Bicultural Work Rights Ambassadors



## Research, Policy and Campaigns



This year we helped over 250 workers resolve industrial disputes and recovered

**\$663,065**

Since the launch of the MWC, we have helped 1,106 workers resolve industrial disputes and recovered

**\$2,172,939**

# Industrial casework

The Migrant Workers Centre Inc (MWC) plays a vital role in helping workers overcome various work-related challenges.

These challenges include not being paid the correct wages, getting injured at work, or facing mistreatment. We support these workers by informing them about their job contracts and rights, calculating how much they should be paid, and collecting all the necessary documentation to substantiate their claims.

We also provide support when assisting workers who require medical help if they were injured at work and connect them with services that respect their cultural backgrounds and languages.

Cases are pursued both individually and where

appropriate, collectively, to increase the impact the Migrant Workers Centre is able to have for workers.

In some cases, when a single worker reaches out to the Migrant Workers Centre, it reveals a more extensive workplace issue that can be resolved for the greater benefit of a larger group of employees. An excellent example is Min\*, a worker that came to the centre for an initial consultation. The outcome saw a group of five factory workers successfully reclaim \$118,425.05 in unpaid wages.

As part of our strategy to provide linguistically and culturally informed services and to maximise our links with and empowerment of communities,

the Migrant Workers Centre actively recruits staff from the major migrant populations seeking assistance. We therefore have a team of multilingual staff, drawn from the migrant communities we serve. Currently, our staff speak a total of 35 languages.

Workers find out about the Migrant Workers Centre through referrals from community organisations, after attending a *Know Your Rights* session, by word of mouth or finding us online.

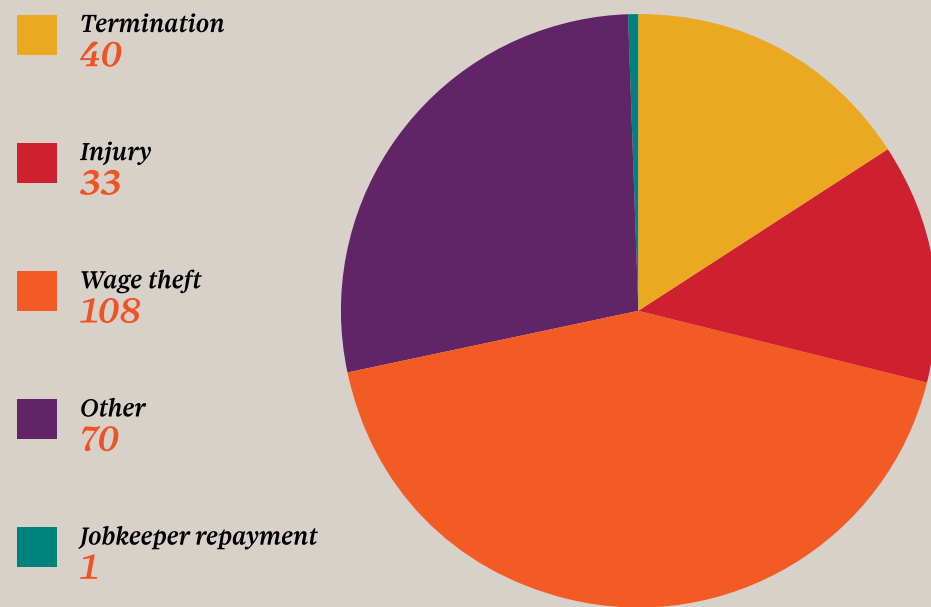
*\*Name has been changed*



# Industrial casework

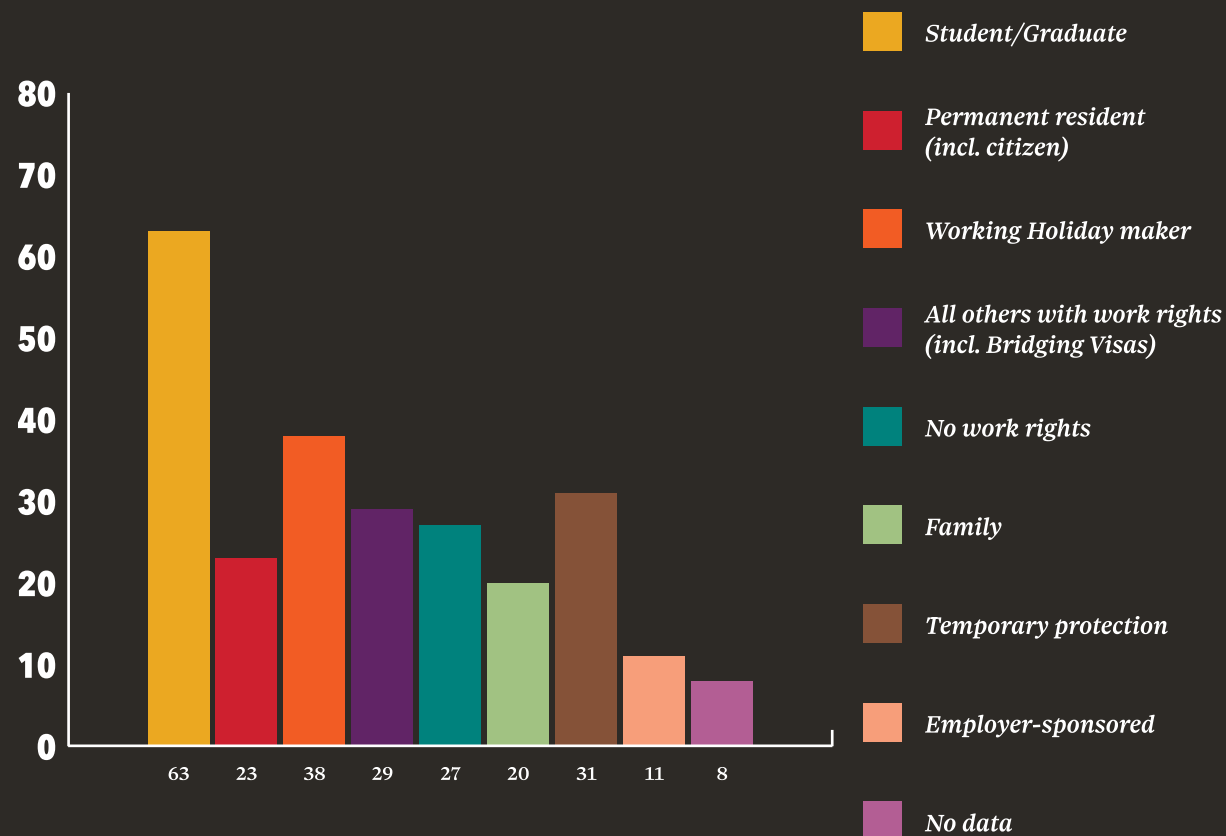
## Workplace issues reported

As in previous years, wage theft continued to be the most prevalent workplace issue, representing 40% (108) of total cases. Termination (40 cases) and injury sustained at work (33 cases) were also common issues. Cases represented in the Other category included consultations, referrals and general advice.



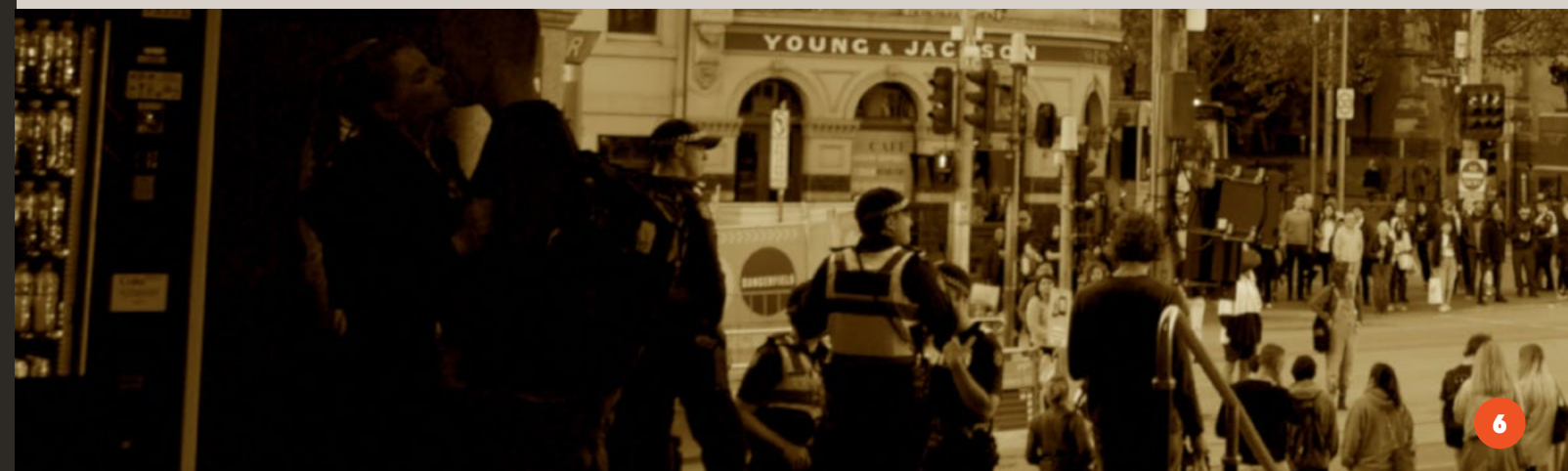
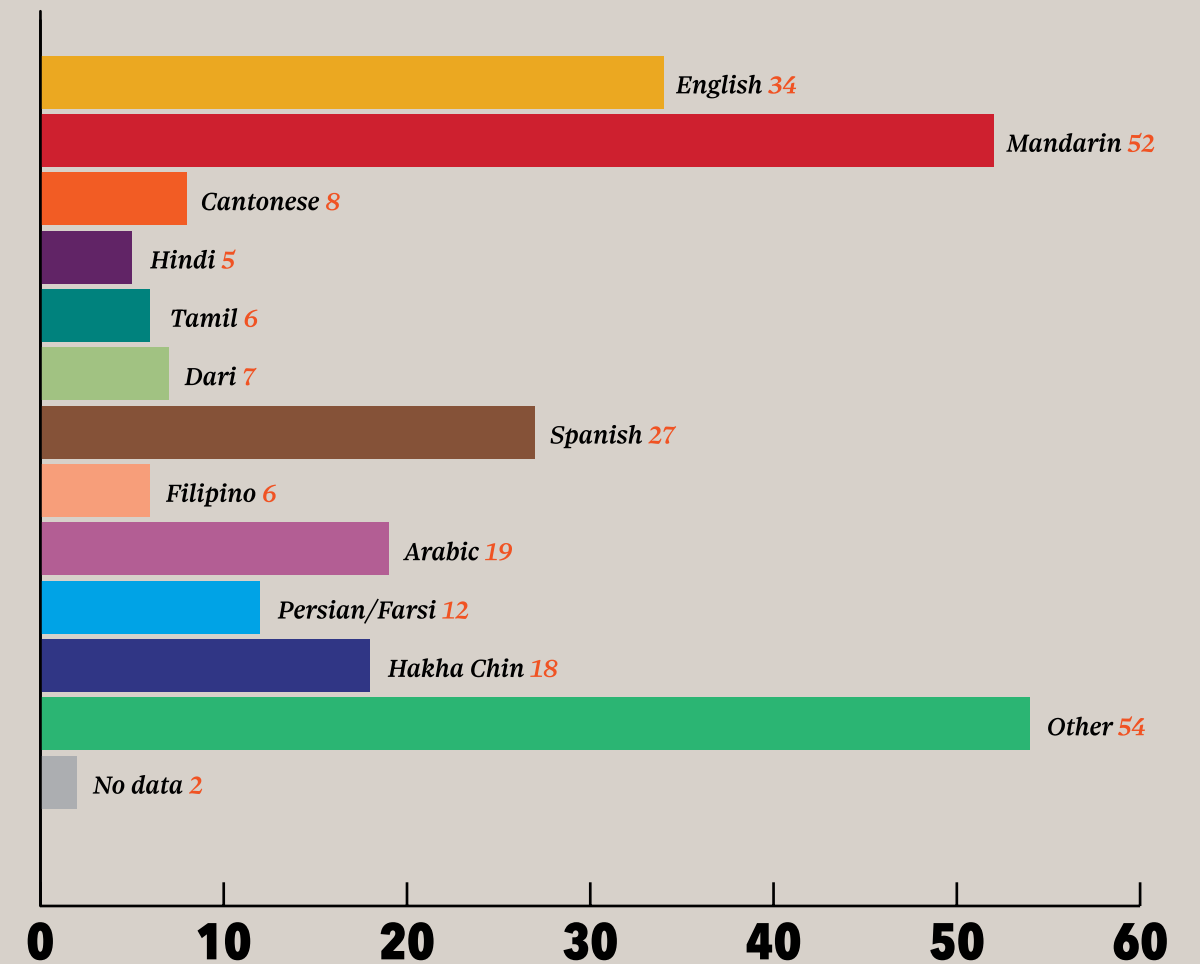
## Migration status

The casework program has seen a diverse range of workers access the service, with a significant majority on temporary visas and approximately 10% on permanent visas. Workers on Student / Graduate visas were most highly represented with 25% of total cases (63 cases). Those on Working Holiday Maker visas (38 cases) and those on Temporary Protection visas (31 cases) were the next most prevalent groups.



## Language

The casework program demonstrates the importance of the MWC's strategy of providing in-language support for clients. Workers seeking support spoke a total of 48 languages other than English. Four languages represented almost half of all cases. 21% (52) of all workers spoke Mandarin, followed by a further 25% speaking either Spanish (27), Arabic (19) or Hakha Chin (18). MWC staff speak all of these main languages. To ensure all workers (where necessary) have access to first language support staff, the MWC arrange either professional or volunteer interpreting for the languages that are not spoken in the centre.

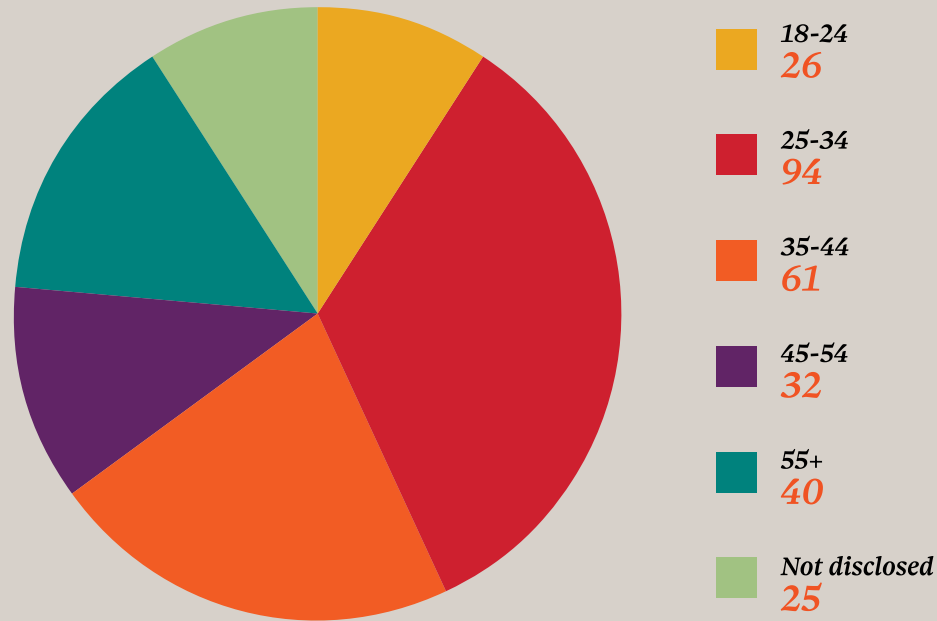




# Industrial casework

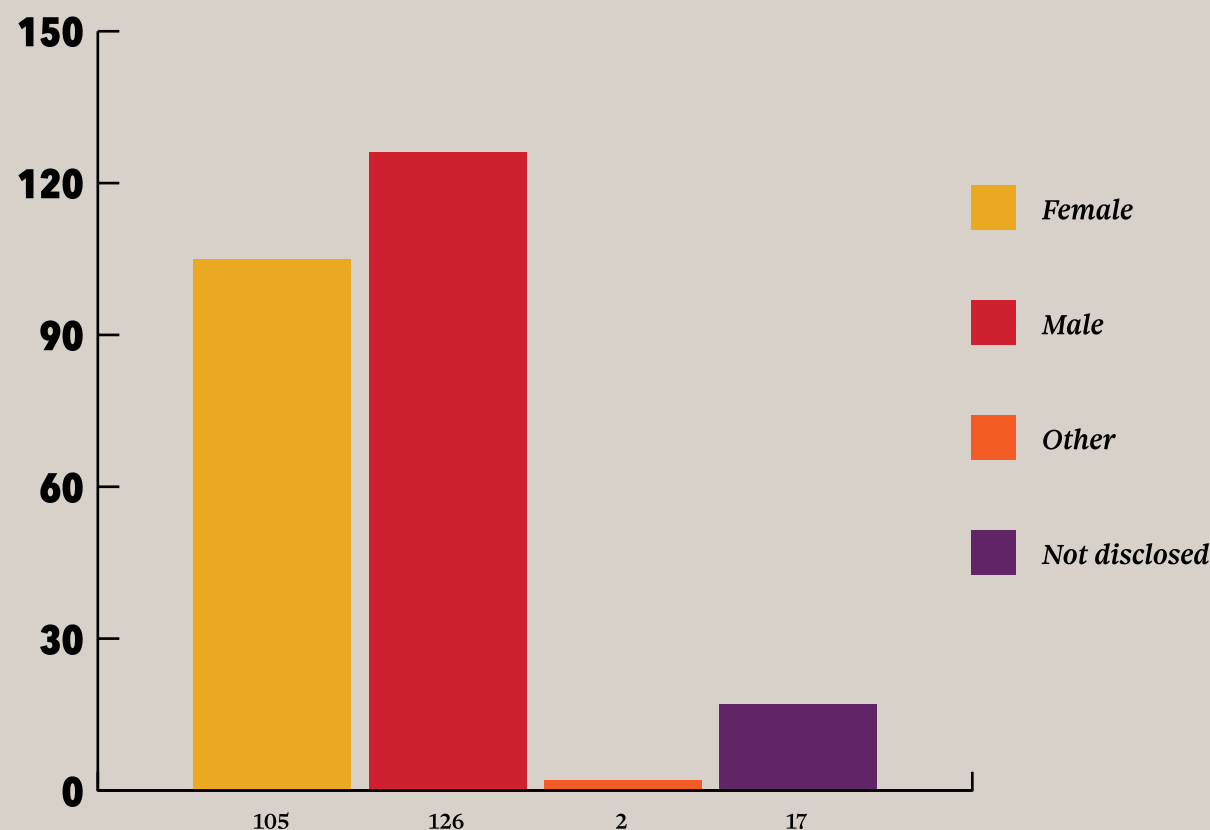
## Age

The casework intake data highlights a diverse age distribution among clients. Individuals aged 25-34 (94 cases) and 35-44 (61 cases) were most highly represented being 62% of total cases. Numbers in the 18 – 24 group increased from 6% in 2021 -22 to 10%, possibly reflecting the increased number of international students able to come to Australia following international restrictions being lifted post the pandemic.



## Gender

Pleasingly the percentage of female workers assisted has increased to close to half of workers assisted compared to 38% in 2021 -22.



# Min's story

*A group of 5 workers have recovered \$118,425.05 in stolen wages with the support of the Migrant Workers Centre after the food manufacturing business they worked for closed down without warning in November 2022.*

Min\* is in her 60s and came to Australia from China in 2006. She had worked packing food for this manufacturer for the 16 years since she arrived. She was employed on a full-time ongoing basis and had the assumption of stability and security.

When the business closed down in late 2022, Min and her co-workers were given no warning. Despite over a decade of dedicated work, Min did not receive any notice period or redundancy pay and the employer also withheld outstanding superannuation, long service leave and annual leave.

Min and four co-workers, who had all worked for the company for between 6 - 16 years, knew they were being treated unfairly and came to the Migrant Workers Centre for advice.

MWC organisers assisted the workers with calculating the total amount of unpaid wages and entitlements they were owed. During this process, we reviewed their industry award with the workers and uncovered

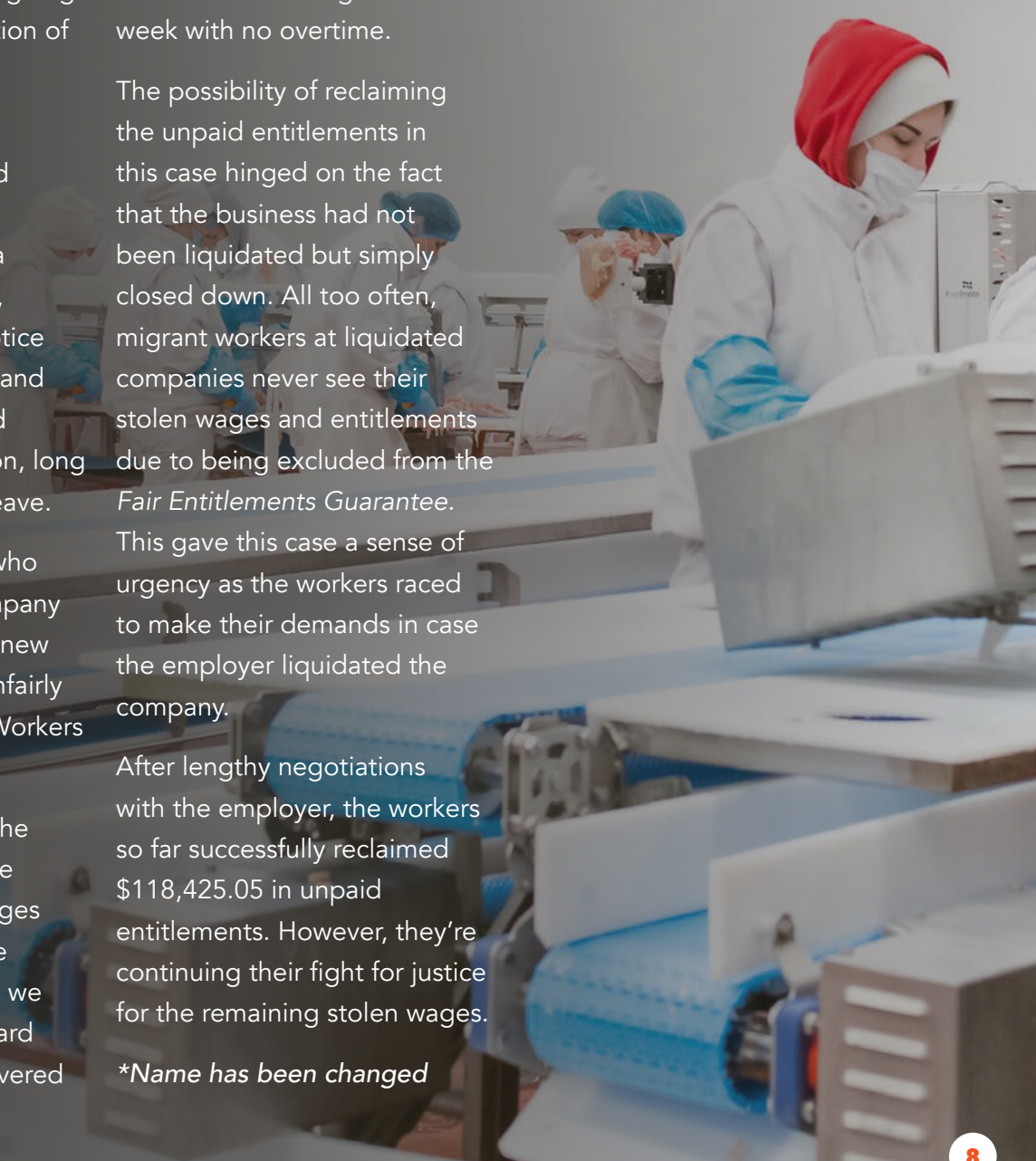
their employer had also been withholding their wages. Their payslips showed they were working at a flat rate of \$21.5 per hour for 38 hours a week. They were in fact working 50 hours a week with no overtime.

The possibility of reclaiming the unpaid entitlements in this case hinged on the fact that the business had not been liquidated but simply closed down. All too often, migrant workers at liquidated companies never see their stolen wages and entitlements due to being excluded from the *Fair Entitlements Guarantee*.

This gave this case a sense of urgency as the workers raced to make their demands in case the employer liquidated the company.

After lengthy negotiations with the employer, the workers so far successfully reclaimed \$118,425.05 in unpaid entitlements. However, they're continuing their fight for justice for the remaining stolen wages.

*\*Name has been changed*





# William and Karen's story

William, a pastry chef from Taiwan, came to Australia in 2011 and met Karen while they were both working on a farm. They returned to Taiwan after completing their working holiday visas, with the goal to migrate and build a life in Australia, with William working as a chef and Karen going to university in Melbourne. They moved to Melbourne in 2015.

They met with a Taiwanese education agent to get visas for studying. William studied a Diploma in Patisserie, only to realise he didn't need to retrain in Australia because his experience counted through RPL (Recognition of Prior Learning).

In 2018, Karen found a job opportunity for William on Facebook. It was a job offered by someone originally from Taiwan who had a business in a small mining town called Karratha in Western Australia. This person promised to help William attain the Employer Nomination Scheme visa (subclass 186) that would let him stay in Australia as a permanent resident after working for four years.

But things didn't go as smoothly as they hoped. The boss of the restaurant arranged a Temporary Skill Shortage visa (subclass 482) for both William and Karen. This visa allowed them to stay for two years. At first, the boss said it was a three-month trial, but it took ten months for William to become a full-time worker.

The contract said William would work 38 hours each week and was paid \$57,000 every year. But he ended up working longer than that, averaging around 48 hours a week. William never received overtime for those extra hours. The couple faced financial constraints, with the cost of living in the small mining town being very expensive.

William had a dispute with another person he worked with who happened to be friends with the boss. After this, William was told he would lose his job in August 2022. His employer told him he had multiple warnings and was performing poorly. He received no warnings and was given a fake warning letter backdated for April 2022.

Because of how they were treated, Karen shared their story online, criticising the boss. This made the boss threaten to take them to court for defamation. William tried to get help from Fair Work Australia, claiming unfair dismissal.

"I want to protect other migrant workers from a bad boss" William says.

In a rush to find another job that would help them stay in Australia, William got a new job offer. He was about to sign the contract, but the next day, the employer changed his mind and said they couldn't work for him anymore.

"This is a very small town, people talk."

William explained that in small towns like this, everyone knows each other, and the town depends on the businesses. So, when there's a problem with the boss, it's really hard for just one person to fight against an entire community.

"We are not sure what to do next, our life is very much in limbo now."

*William reached out to the Migrant Workers Centre for support. Through our industrial casework program, we were able to recover \$20,000 (before tax) in compensation.*



# Education and empowerment

Educating and empowering migrant workers is a core part of the Migrant Workers Centre's strategy to address, and reduce, the incidence of worker exploitation. Workers who enter the workforce with a strong understanding of their rights and their employer's obligations are in a stronger position to recognise exploitative and unsafe work situations and have the knowledge and confidence to take action. Often, employers seeking to take advantage of the lack of familiarity with workplace rights will also do the right thing once they realise the worker understands their rights and where to seek assistance.

Three Migrant Workers Centre programs have contributed to building knowledge, confidence and capacity in both individual workers and their communities more broadly to address workplace issues.



## Know your rights sessions

Know Your Rights sessions have been a core component of the organisation's work since our inception in 2018. The KYR sessions are delivered by Migrant Workers Centre Organisers to education institutions and community organisations, covering basic workplace rights and safety.

The program has substantially expanded this year as we have built stronger working relationships with education providers and increased our reach in community providers. Highlights include:

- multiple KYR sessions delivered to PALM scheme workers in regional areas by ambassadors;
- partnership with Sisterworks to present dedicated KYR sessions for migrant women in various locations in Victoria;
- partnership with UniLodge, holding sessions with international students every semester;
- our ongoing, strong relationship with migrant adults learning English at Chisholm TAFE, Box Hill TAFE and Melbourne Polytechnic;
- a series of in-language sessions delivered to the Togolese, Burmese, and recently arrived communities at the Ballarat Regional Multicultural Council.

After each session, participants can fill out a survey indicating how useful they found the session and can also ask for a further follow up phone call to discuss any work matters that they have. The KYR sessions remain a key pathway for workers coming to us for further assistance.

## Work Rights Clinic

These sessions are an opportunity for people born overseas and working in Australia to receive an initial 1-on-1 consultation with a Migrant Workers Centre staff member about a workplace question or issue. These are generally held after a Know Your Rights session, with the intent to support those who are concerned about their own workplace issue.

Individuals were able to address questions surrounding:

- pay and other entitlements including superannuation;
- coverage by industrial awards or enterprise bargaining agreements;
- employment conditions such as employment status, probationary period, hours of work and contract end dates;
- other workplace rights and entitlements such as discrimination, bullying and harassment, safety, termination and working through an ABN.

## Bicultural Work Rights Ambassadors' Program

The goal of the Bicultural Work Rights Ambassadors' Program is to train and empower leaders from migrant communities.

Ambassadors organise, promote and deliver information sessions in their own language to members of their community. This program helps us reach more communities across Victoria and in more languages. Instead of just giving information from the top, the program facilitates trusted members of each community share information within their own group. This also means the sessions can be done in ways that fit each community's culture and needs.

In the 2022-23 financial year, the Migrant Workers Centre has welcomed a new cohort of 10 Multicultural Safety Ambassadors. This year's ambassadors speak 16 languages: Hazaragi, Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, Portuguese, Pashto, Persian, French, Karen, Thai, Chin (Tedim), Chin (Zo), Burmese, Fijian, Tagalog, Filipino.

This is the fifth iteration of the program – formerly known as the Multicultural Safety Ambassadors' Program – which trains and empowers community leaders to deliver sessions about workplace rights and health and safety to their community members.



*"I found the program online and was excited to join as an ambassador. The ambassador training process was fantastic and flexible. The staff were helpful and cooperative. Guest speakers and facilitators gave us a lot of information to absorb."*

*"Since then, I've organised and delivered 5 community sessions. Being an ambassador allowed me to listen to the lived experiences of my community members while delivering these sessions."*

Neha, Bicultural Work Rights Ambassador



# Research, Policy and Campaigns

Advocacy and campaigning for better workplace rights for migrant workers forms an essential component of the work of the Migrant Workers Centre.

Addressing structural causes of exploitation and advocating for policy change are the core of this strategic work, frequently undertaken in collaboration with other like-minded organisations. Without this work, individual workers may benefit from our casework but equity and justice for all migrant workers will not be advanced.

The MWC therefore uses its lived experience of migrant workers to inform and build compelling evidence that can strengthen its advocacy work. Strategies in this area include an annual

conference where we present key research and policy findings, research reports and submissions to parliamentary enquiries

In 2022-23, the MWC conducted three research projects that were accompanied by advocacy for a more equitable migration system. The first, *Waiting to be Seen* explores visa processing delays and how this uncertainty affects migrant workers. The second, *Insecure by Design* looks at the intersection between Australia's migration system and the labour market, while the third, *Unlocking Talent*, explores in greater depth how migrant workers experience and navigate the labour market.

## Waiting to be seen

This report brings to light a concerning issue in Australia's immigration system, where many people are left in uncertainty due to long wait times for visas, sometimes lasting up to 3 or more years.

The system's focus on temporary visas often leaves permanent residency applicants overlooked. The report highlights significant problems, such

as increased waiting times for certain visas and unequal treatment of different visa types.

The report suggests changes are required to ensure fair and timely visa processing, protecting the rights of migrant workers and creating a more secure and inclusive system to permanent residency.

### Key findings

- A six-fold increase in the number of people stuck on Bridging Visas;
- A dramatic increase in wait times for visas; the processing time for the subclass 887 visa has more than doubled and is currently at 24 months;
- The de-prioritisation of permanent visas at the expense of temporary visas and employer sponsored visas. A Skilled Independent visa (subclass 189) applicant can expect to wait for 39 months to become a permanent resident while one applying for an Employer sponsored visa (subclass 186) will receive the visa in 12 months. The Working Holiday and Student Visas, which are amongst the most restrictive temporary visas, are processed the fastest;
- The Department of Home Affairs has reduced the number of officers assigned to onshore visa processing, despite the number of people who make onshore visa applications in the last decade rapidly increasing; and
- Unjustifiable delays in 887 visa processing evidenced by a low rate of refusals.

### Policy recommendations

- Establish clear pathways to permanent residency for all temporary visa programs so that migrant workers are not pushed toward extended, arbitrary visa hopping;
- Allocate increased resources and public service employees to visa processing to clear the existing backlog of onshore visa applications and maintain a reasonable level of resources and workforce required to process visa applications in six months at the maximum;
- Provide clear information and grievance redress channels about visa processing;
- Improve access to justice, compensation, and treatment for migrant workers on temporary visas; and
- Remove the work restrictions for people holding Bridging Visa E.





# 887 Visa Campaign

Fighting for Fair Visa Processing Times

The publication of this report came alongside a grassroots campaign led by 887 visa applicants who have been suffering under extensive visa wait times.

The 887 regional visa is one of the few permanent visas, and migrant workers become eligible after living and working in designated areas in regional Australia for several years. However, in recent years, the wait times for this visa have exploded, leaving 887 visa applicants living in limbo with wait times of over 2 years. This not only prolongs uncertainty for many migrants who've dedicated years of their lives to their communities, but also affects access to childcare, education, housing and support services.

In September, we supported 887 visa applicants around Australia to hold rallies drawing attention to this issue. We held phonebanks to turn out people to protests in Melbourne, Adelaide, Hobart and Brisbane, and supported 887 applicants to amplify their voices in the media.



*The petition Fighting for Fair Visa Processing Times reached a total of*

**1689**  
*signatures.*

To: Department of Home Affairs  
**Fighting for Fair Visa Processing Times**  
1,689 of 2,000 signatures  
Sign the petition

# Insecure by Design

Australia's Migration System and Migrant Workers' Job Market Experience

"Insecure by Design" involved an online survey completed by 1,002 migrant workers, complemented by in-depth interviews with 65 participants. The findings showed that visa discrimination creates a dual job market that pushes migrant workers towards insecure, exploitative jobs, while limiting their access to secure and decent work. It also showed that Australia's temporary visa system hinders migrant workers from utilising their skills, experience, and qualifications adequately in the labour market.



## Key findings

- Half of all respondents reported feeling unsafe at work with as many as 18% always feeling unsafe at work;
- Migrant workers on temporary visas and insecure work are far more likely to experience workplace safety hazards; and
- 58% of respondents had experienced wage theft with only 26% of those able to successfully recover stolen wages.

## Policy recommendations

1. Ban discrimination based on migration status in the job market;
2. Better recognise migrant workers' skills, overseas qualifications and experience;
3. Improve job security, access to justice, compensation, and whistle-blower protections; and
4. Replace employer sponsorship with new visas that improve labour mobility, build pathways to permanent residency for all temporary visa programs and restore the balance between permanent and temporary visa programs. theft with only 26% of those able to successfully recover stolen wages.



# Unlocking Talent

Empowering Migrant Workers with Equal Work Opportunities

# 2023 Conference



In collaboration with Unions NSW, we undertook a research project that explored the employment experiences of migrant workers. This study investigated issues of critical concern to migrant workers, such as access to job opportunities, racial discrimination, and skills recognition. Over 1,200 migrant workers shared their experiences through our survey.

Our annual conference, attended by 319 participants in total, provided a platform to share our research findings and advocate for change. The conference provided a unique opportunity to facilitate discussions among policymakers, industry leaders, scholars, and migrant workers themselves. Over the two-day event, we were able to generate constructive dialogue on how to tackle the systemic issues contributing to migrant workers' exploitation in Australia.

This year's conference spotlighted our study, *Insecure by Design*, which revealed the systemic obstacles migrant workers encounter in Australia's migration and labour policies. We also launched *Unlocking Talent*, our joint report with Unions NSW, which emphasised the importance of recognising and leveraging migrant workers' skills and experiences in the Australian job market.

A range of esteemed speakers participated in our conference, bringing valuable insights and expertise to our discussions. Key speakers represented a range of organisations including Unions NSW, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, Enable, Bakhtar Community Organisation, United Workers Union, and the Filipino-Australian Students Council of Victoria.

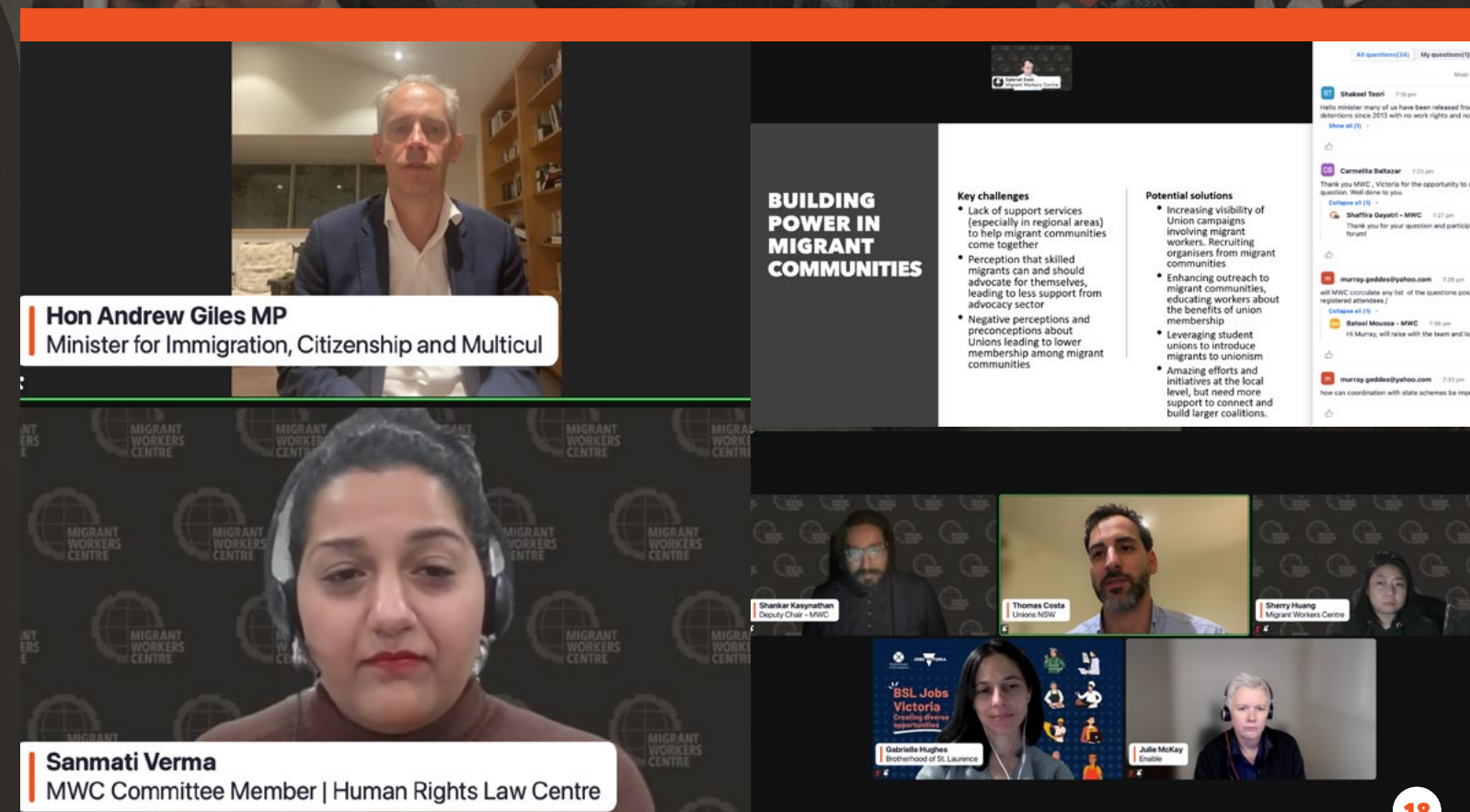
The conference concluded with an address by the Hon Andrew Giles MP, Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs, about upcoming reforms to address migrant worker exploitation. This was followed by an engaging Q&A session, providing conference attendees with an opportunity to express their queries and concerns directly to the Minister.

## Key findings

- 39% of respondents were denied job opportunities because of their visa type;
- 21% had been paid or offered a lower salary because of their nationality;
- 37% had been paid or offered a lower salary because of their visa type; and
- 56% are required to undertake additional studies to practise their occupation in Australia.

## Policy recommendations

1. Provide all graduate visa holders with the option to extend their visa.
2. Replace the current employer-sponsored visa framework with an industry sponsorship model.
3. Provide bridging programs, training initiatives, and re-qualification opportunities that can assist skilled migrants in aligning their qualifications with local standards and requirements.
4. Establish clear and efficient processes for acknowledging the skills of migrant workers.
5. Implement a legal framework that prevents discrimination based on migration status in the job market.
6. Establish migrant workers centres in each state.
7. Implement robust protections for whistleblowers.

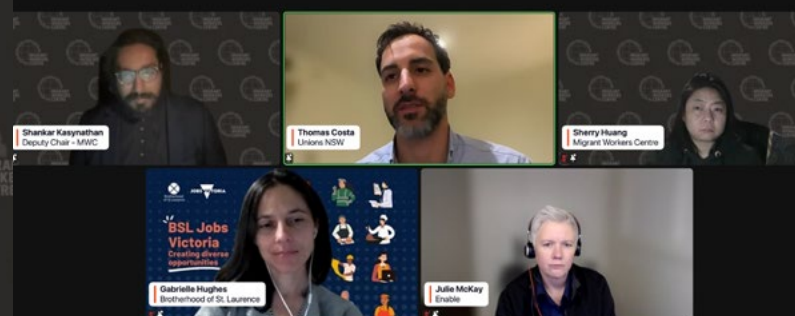
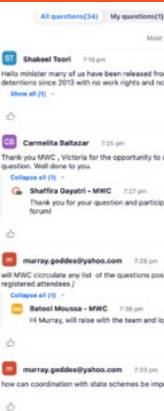


**Hon Andrew Giles MP**  
Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs

**Sanmati Verma**  
MWC Committee Member | Human Rights Law Centre

### BUILDING POWER IN MIGRANT COMMUNITIES

- | Key challenges   | Potential solutions   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of support services (especially in regional areas) to help migrant communities come together</li> <li>• Perception that skilled migrants can and should advocate for themselves, leading to less support from advocacy sector</li> <li>• Negative perceptions and preconceptions about Unions leading to lower membership among migrant communities</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increasing visibility of Union campaigns involving migrant workers. Recruiting organisers from migrant communities</li> <li>• Enhancing outreach to migrant communities, educating workers about the benefits of union membership</li> <li>• Leveraging student unions to introduce migrants to unionism</li> <li>• Amazing efforts and initiatives at the local level, but need more support to connect and build larger coalitions.</li> </ul> |





# Policy submissions

In 2022-23, the Migrant Workers Centre made seven submissions to government inquiries:

1. Joint Submission to the Comprehensive Review of Australia's Migration System (Part 1)
2. Joint Submission to the Comprehensive Review of Australia's Migration System (Part 2)
3. Submission to the Senate Education and Employment Legislation Committee on the Inquiry into the Family Assistance Legislation (Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022
4. Submission to the Treasury for Consideration towards the Employment Taskforce's White Paper

5. Submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration on the Inquiry into the Role of Permanent Migration in Nation Building
6. Joint Submission to the Joint Standing Committee Inquiry – Migration, Pathway to Nation Building
7. Submission to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations regarding the scheme of assistance established under the Fair Entitlements Guarantee Regulation 2012

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations also invited us to comment on the Fair Entitlement Guarantee.

The **Family Assistance Legislation (Cheaper Child Care) Bill 2022** sought to improve childcare affordability and support parents and carers to enter or increase their participation in the workforce. Although temporary visa holders contribute substantially to Australian society, they are denied access to the Child Care Subsidy and many other government services. Our recommendations called on the Government to extend access to the Child Care Subsidy for migrant workers experiencing financial hardship and who are eligible for permanent residency.

The **Treasury Employment White Paper Consultation** sought to build on the outcomes of the Jobs and Skills Summit, with a focus on 'full employment', productivity growth, and women's economic participation and equality. Our submission underscored the need for systemic changes to create a more equitable labour market, where migrant workers can contribute their skills and experience fully, without facing exploitation or discrimination.

Our recommendations called on the Government to:

- streamline the skills recognition processes and better regulate skills assessment bodies
- make discrimination against migration status in the labour market unlawful
- establish a national labour hire licensing scheme
- develop job-ready programs that educate migrant workers about workplace laws and meet industry skills needs
- develop campaigns to promote anti-racism and diversity in the workplace.

## Key Policy recommendations

The Migrant Workers Centre made two joint submissions to the Comprehensive Review of Australia's Migration System. This long-awaited review investigated how our migration system can be overhauled to better meet Australia's current and future needs.

Our key recommendations called on the Government to:

- reform the visa system to end uncertainty and 'permanent temporariness'
- provide equal protections for visa holders at their workplaces by removing unnecessary restrictions and introducing whistleblower protections
- replace skilled and employer-sponsor migration with a system that provides for self-nominated pathways to permanent residency
- enhance family reunification by reinstating 'demand driven' family migration.





# Policy submissions (cont.)

The Migrant Workers Centre made two submissions to the Inquiry into the Role of Permanent Migration in National Building – one jointly, with Human Rights Law Centre and the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre and one independently. The Inquiry broadly examined how permanent migration contributes to nation building, cultural diversity, and economic sustainability. Our submissions highlighted the findings of our research, which found that temporary visa status is a workplace hazard, exposing workers to exploitative conditions, job insecurity, and barriers to equal participation in the labour market.

Our key recommendations mirrored those made in our submissions to the Comprehensive Review of the Migration System, with added emphasis on the need to:

- improve job security and access to justice for migrant workers
- improve the dissemination of information about workplace rights and entitlements
- improve the quality and integrity of the migration service industry.

The Migrant Workers Centre was invited to comment on the scheme for the *Fair Entitlements Guarantee*, which provides a legislative safety net for eligible workers whose former employer has become insolvent.

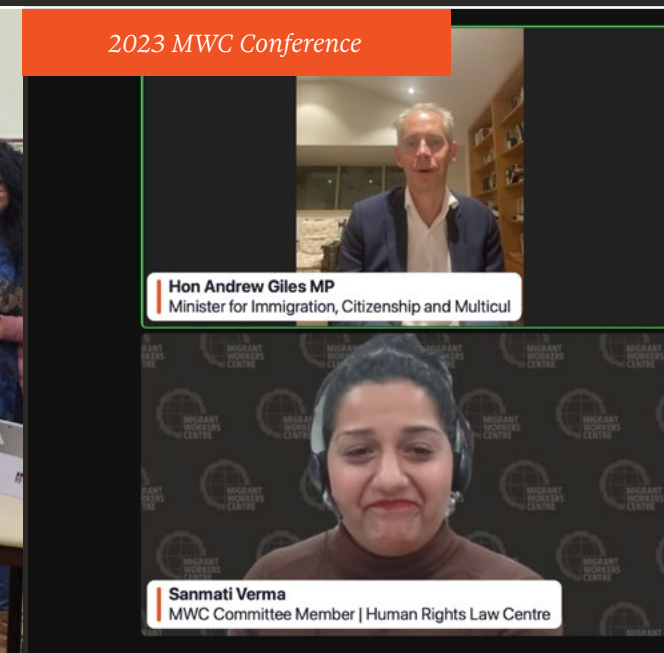
As it stands, temporary visa holders are not eligible to access the scheme. This leaves many workers, especially those who are precluded from income support, vulnerable to extreme financial hardship.

Our recommendations called for the extension of the *Fair Entitlement Guarantee* to temporary visa holders to help them recover unpaid wages and entitlements.

# Highlights of 2022-2023



Bicultural Work Rights Ambassador Program



2023 MWC Conference

Hon Andrew Giles MP  
Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs

Sanmati Verma  
MWC Committee Member | Human Rights Law Centre



Syrian community  
Know your Rights session



Solidarity Cup 2022



BWRAP ambassador Bassir  
delivering a Work Rights session



BWRAP ambassador, Jotame  
delivering a Work Rights session









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