

# Media Release

5 June 2023

## **A welcome step in protecting temporary migrant workers from exploitation**

The federal government has taken a positive step in addressing a key weakness in Australia's migration system, with the decision today to crack down on the exploitation of low-paid temporary migrant workers.

CORE Community Services has welcomed the decision to introduce measures that will protect temporary visa holders from exploitation by employers and ensure they are not jeopardised by speaking out.

The Chief Executive Officer of CORE, Juana Reinoso, said the proposed measures recognise the vulnerable situation of many temporary visa holders who may not be fully aware of all their employment rights and, in any case, are frequently not in a position to speak out for fear of losing their job.

"It is entirely unacceptable that so many migrant workers are being paid below the minimum wage and that this has been allowed to persist for so long.

"These are people who have come to Australia, often in the most difficult circumstances, and may not be aware of their rights. Speaking up can mean risking their income, employment and even their right to stay in Australia.

"Employers who knowingly exploit these vulnerable people need to be called out, and protections put in place to ensure that coercion and intimidation have no part in the way we treat migrants, refugees and others on temporary visas," Ms Reinoso said.

It is estimated that one in six migrant workers are paid below the minimum wage. The proposed measures will:

- Make it a criminal offense to coerce someone into breaching their visa condition;
- Introduce prohibition notices to stop employers from further hiring people on temporary visas where they have exploited migrants;
- Increase penalties and new compliance tools to deter exploitation; and
- Repeal section 235 of the Migration Act which actively undermines people reporting exploitative behaviour.

CORE Community Services is one of the largest settlement service providers in the Fairfield Local Government Area of NSW, which takes in the largest proportion of new arrivals in Australia.

"We are currently seeing unprecedented demand on our services as a result of cost-of-living issues, and this is compounded in circumstances where people are suffering because of unacceptable wages or conditions," Ms Reinoso said.

“Arriving in a new country can be extremely challenging in dealing with issues such as housing, healthcare, child care and education. That burden is compounded when low-paid temporary migrant workers face exploitation, under-payment or intimidation at work.”

- ends -

**CORE Community Services Ltd is a not-for-profit organisation operating in South West Sydney since 1979. We run a wide range of activities, and programs across our key services; Children’s Services, Youth Services, Multicultural Communities, Aged and Disability Care and Community Hubs with a focus on culturally and linguistically diverse communities and vulnerable communities.**

**Media contact:**

Jenny Liem

0427 864 445

[media@corecs.org.au](mailto:media@corecs.org.au)