

The Salvation Army's new Samaritan Accommodation Centre in Sydney will provide both crisis and long term support to migrant women found anywhere in Australia to have been subjected to trafficking, slavery, or slavery-like practices. For up to 12 months, a team of qualified workers, under the supervision of the co-founder of the University of Technology Sydney's Anti-Slavery Project, Jenny Stanger, will provide safe, secure accommodation, comprehensive case management and culturally sensitive support, including information and referrals about legal services, medical and mental health care, English language training and employment. This is an entirely community-based service with 92% of its funding coming from the Salvation Army's annual Red Shield Appeal.

The Federal Minister for the Status of Women and Minister for Housing, Tanya Plibersek MP, spoke at the launch of the Centre on 1 May 2008. She reported that 98 trafficked women have been given access to government – funded assistance since 2004, and indicated that she will ask the Commonwealth departments currently administering the Government's anti-slavery Action Plan to explore options for expanding the now conditional aid provided to victims of trafficking in Australia.

The Salvation Army acknowledged the assistance of its community partners - the Aids Council of Australia, the Anti-Slavery Project, Faculty of Law, UTS, The City of Sydney Homelessness and Social Programs, Immigration Women Speakout Association, the Sisters of St Joseph's Counter Trafficking Project and the Thai Welfare Association. A wide range of other anti-trafficking organisations were also represented at the launch, including ACMRO and members of the Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans.

While this is a major step forward, there is still no support provided either by the Government or non-government agencies, to men found to have been subjected to trafficking, debt bondage, slavery or slavery-like conditions in Australia. It is to be hoped that the Government will soon introduce measures to enforce compliance with, and strengthen the requirements of, the Employer Sponsored Temporary Business visa (the subclass 457). There have been a number of cases where abuses of this visa's requirements have allowed the employment in a range of industries of both men and women who have been subjected to debt bondage, economic exploitation, unsafe working conditions and sub-standard living conditions.

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