



## Media release

### SCOA response to Four Corners report of exploitation of migrant workers

The Settlement Council of Australia welcomes the Fair Work Ombudsman investigation into the disturbing allegations of exploitation of migrant workers in Australia aired on the ABC's Four Corners program on Monday night.

Exploitation of migrant workers is a serious issue and a clear example of the discrimination faced by migrants in their day to day lives. Any breaches of workplace laws discovered as a result of the FWO investigation must be dealt with strongly and swiftly as the alleged actions of these employers have no place in our great multicultural democracy.

However compliance with workplace laws is only one side of the story. There also needs to be a strong continuing focus on ensuring that migrants to Australia are supported into stable and decent work and that they are aware of the workplace laws which ensure that all employees in a Australia are paid and treated fairly in employment. This focus is all the more important in rural and regional areas of Australia where newly arrived migrants may struggle to connect to community services

'Providing stronger support to migrants and temporary visa holders in regional and rural areas is crucial – not only to begin to address the issues of vulnerability and isolation highlighted in the Four Corners report, but to help those newly arrived in Australia connect with fair jobs and continue to contribute to the economy' said Dewani Bakkum, Chair of the Settlement Council of Australia.

'Ensuring migrants have access to support is essential. Migrants, be they permanent or temporary, can be vulnerable when they arrive in Australia, with little access to support networks or knowledge of their rights. Settlement agencies across the country are experienced in providing a guiding hand, orienting people to their new environment and ensuring people get the best start in their new lives'.

'Many settlement agencies have innovative social enterprises and strong connections to regional employment and would be well placed to provide practical ethical support to migrants wanting to come to Australia to make a go of it.'

As investigations responding to the allegations take place it will be important to ensure that migrants trapped in impossible working situations are not targeted.

Strengthening regional resettlement and links to fair and equitable regional employment opportunities is a key goal for Settlement Council members working in communities across Australia.

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