

FECCA welcomes protections for migrant workers in proposed legislation

Australia's peak multicultural organisation – the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia (FECCA) – welcomes Federal Government proposed legislation that will increase protections for migrant workers. The Bill penalises and bans employers for a period if they are found to have violated the rights of migrant workers.

FECCA Chairperson, Mary Patetsos, said the Migration Amendment (Protecting Migrant Workers) Bill 2021 would reduce the probability of workers entering into work arrangements against their will or under exploitative conditions.

Wage theft and other coercive practices committed by employers who prey on one of the most vulnerable groups in Australia must be stopped and perpetrators penalised accordingly, as [outlined by the Minister for Immigration the Hon. Alex Hawke MP](#).

“Circumstance pushes many migrant workers into jobs where they are underpaid and often at the mercy of the employer,” said Ms Patetsos.

“Employers will now have a duty of care towards workers from overseas – something woefully absent today in many businesses.”

Ms Patetsos said the Bill restores the dignity of employees from overseas and, recognises their huge contribution to keeping key sectors of the Australian economy vibrant.

“It’s also important to acknowledge that most businesses are doing the right thing by their workers, and these proposed changes will give them confidence and will restore the reputation of those sectors who heavily rely on hard working migrant workers,” she said.

Ms Patetsos expressed her hopes that the Bill will be accompanied by an effective engagement and communications strategy and protections for affected workers.

“Many migrant workers are not aware of the Fair Work Ombudsman and its role. It’s critical that newly arrived migrant workers are made aware of their rights and that they will not lose their place in Australia if they stand up for these rights.” she said.

“FECCA will work with the Government toward ensuring the safety of all migrant workers.”

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