



AGENDA ITEM: BEST PRACTISES IN JOINT INVESTIGATIONS AND SPECIALISED PROSECUTIONS

AFP TALKING POINTS

- Hello, I'm Commander Hilda Sirec, thank you for the invitation to speak today. I work for the Australian Federal Police where I lead the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation or ACCCE and the Human Exploitation Command nationally for the AFP.
- In Australia, human trafficking is the physical movement of people across or within borders by **coercing, threatening or deceiving them, for the purpose of exploiting them** when they reach their destination.
- What **differentiates** human trafficking from people smuggling is that human trafficking involves the **ongoing exploitation of a person**.

The AFP is responsible for investigating human trafficking, including:

- entry and exit trafficking;
 - sexual servitude;
 - forced labour;
 - child trafficking;
 - debt bondage;
 - domestic servitude;
 - slavery;
 - deceptive recruiting; and
 - organ trafficking
- In Australia, the most predominant forms of human trafficking reported are forced marriage and sexual servitude. Unfortunately, this is a significantly under-reported crime type and thresholds for criminal prosecutions are always met or they are not most effective path to take.

Key Challenges in reporting and prosecutions

- There are many investigative challenges we face in this crime type
- Victims often don't know that they are victims according to Australian law
- Victims are mostly young, vulnerable, scared, and cannot speak English, so do not know how or feel capable of reporting
- There is sometimes a distrust of Police to report

OFFICIAL

- Police have difficulties obtaining sufficient evidence to support a charge and prosecution which is further complicated where such evidence might be located overseas
- Perpetrators are often family members and/or part of the community of the victim, making them reluctant or unable to assist with investigations;
- Victims may be unaware of the support services available.
- State and territory police focus on intersecting crimes such as domestic and family violence and do not recognise/distinguish human trafficking.
- **Environmental factors such as COVID-19 and domestic and international travel restrictions** have been contributed to a reduction in reporting of human trafficking, but we have more recently seen higher than average reporting more recently – this may be due to opening of borders and well as victims having great access to the means to report.
- The AFP is focused on the **prevention, disruption, and investigation** of modern slavery and human trafficking practices – and the **protection and support of victims**.
- The AFP takes a victim-centric approach when dealing with all human trafficking matters – including forced marriage, and **works collaboratively with state and territory law enforcement agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs)**.
- The majority of reports of modern slavery and human trafficking matters to the AFP come from NGOs, schools, medical providers and members of the victim's community. Reports also come from:
 - Witnesses of alleged offences;
 - Commonwealth agencies, including Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and Australian Border Force (ABF);
 - State and territory police forces; and
 - Victims.
- Human trafficking **requires a different law enforcement approach**. In some instances, such as forced marriage and exit trafficking, the AFP is notified prior to the marriage or travel taking place. This provides an opportunity for police to assist in disrupting and preventing the crime, and education. This is a **harm minimisation approach**.

Victim care is a joint responsibility

- The AFP works with its domestic and international partners to support the repatriation of victims from overseas.
- The **Support for Trafficked People Program (STPP)** assists victims of modern slavery and human trafficking.
- The STPP is administered by the Department of Social Services and led by the Australian Red Cross.

OFFICIAL

OFFICIAL

- The **AFP is the only law enforcement agency** in Australia that can refer suspected victims of modern slavery and human trafficking to the STPP.
- We provide a nationally consistent approach to all cases of modern slavery reported to us and are equipped to provide a range of protections to victims as needed.
- Our officers are specially trained to assess each case and refer victims to the most appropriate support services for their circumstances.

International Engagement

- The AFP's International Liaison Officer Network provides investigative assistance and capacity uplift to foreign law enforcement in relation to a range of crime types including modern slavery and human trafficking.
- The AFP has 166 members posted to 33 countries around the world.
- Human trafficking does not discriminate and there is no particular set of target countries.

Look a Little Deeper

- The AFP's **Look a Little Deeper (LALD)** project is a human trafficking and slavery information and awareness program for frontline police and other government agencies.
- The LALD campaign:
 - recognises that first responders are likely to encounter indicators of human trafficking and slavery in the course of their duties; and,
 - aims to equip them with the skills necessary to identify and respond to indicators of human trafficking, and enhance victim safety.
- All Australian police forces and numerous Commonwealth government agencies that are likely to interact with persons at risk of human trafficking are receiving the Look a Little Deeper educational awareness-raising package.

Community Liaison Teams (CLT)

- CLTs provide pathways through which the AFP and the community can build meaningful and productive relationships.
- The AFP have engaged with women leaders through these CLTs to grow awareness and education on forced marriage.

My one key recommendation

- Human trafficking **requires a different law enforcement approach**. Taking a victim-centric approach to human trafficking with the collaboration of government, law enforcement and non-government organisations ensures that **deterrence** and **prevention** are a priority and the future **safety of victims** is paramount.

OFFICIAL