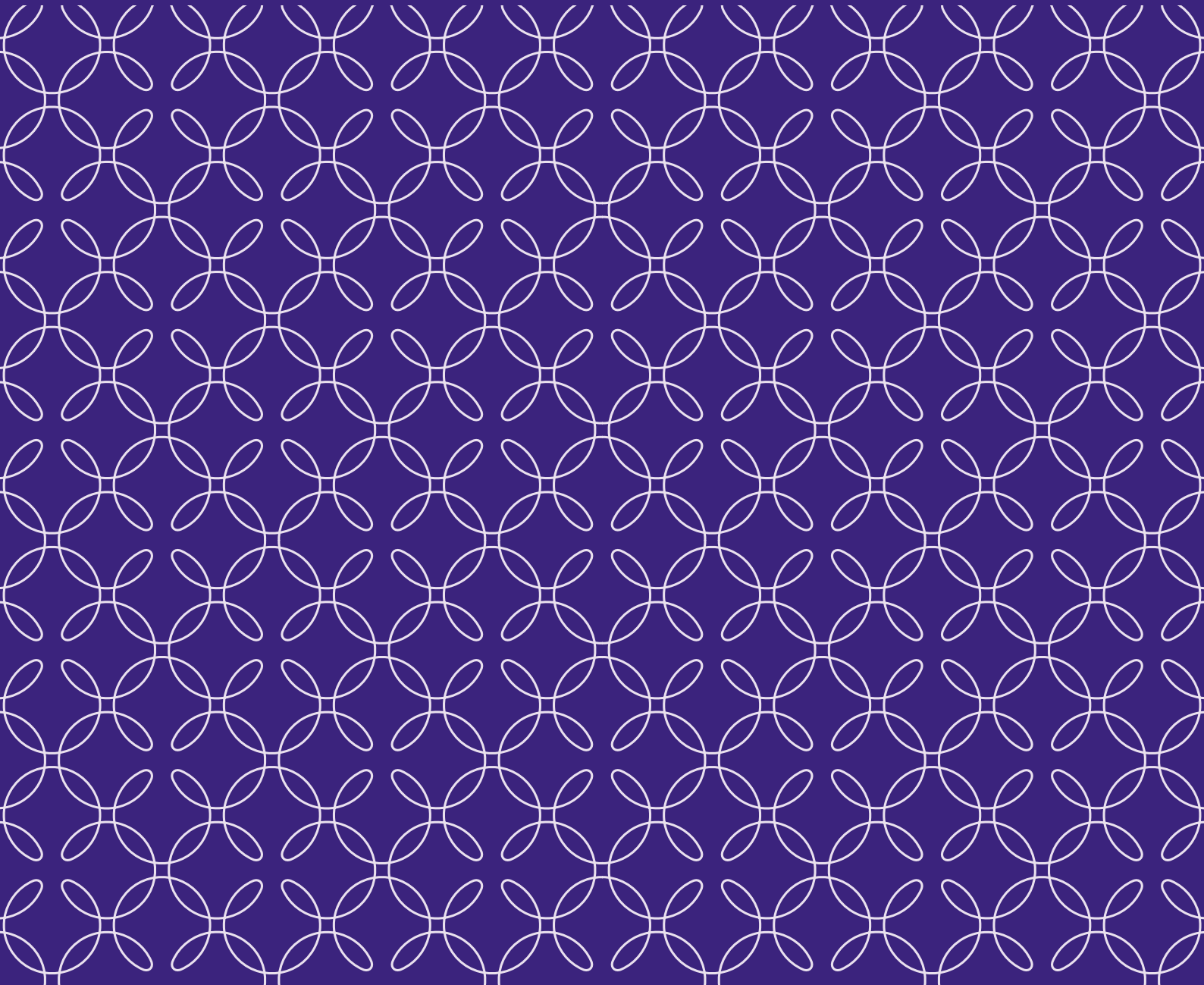

Office of the
NSW Anti-slavery
Commissioner

Engaging for Freedom

NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner's Annual Report
Financial Year 2023–2024





Call 1800 FREEDOM (1800 37 33 36)
for confidential support and advice
for victims of modern slavery

Published by Office of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner October 2024
dcj.nsw.gov.au/justice/anti-slavery-commissioner.html

Not legal advice

Nothing in this report constitutes legal advice.

Copyright and disclaimer

© NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner. Information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing, October 2024, and is subject to change. For more information, please visit dcj.nsw.gov.au/justice/anti-slavery-commissioner.html.

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	4
Introduction from the Anti-slavery Commissioner	6
Key achievements	7
FY2024 by the numbers	8
Constraining factors	10
Recommendations	13
Strategic Plan 2023–2026	16
Modern slavery in New South Wales	18
About the Office of the Anti-slavery Commissioner	20
Overview of this report's structure	22
Build prevention capacity	23
Enable remedy	33
Foster responsible business practices	41
Change the narrative	49
Develop a community of purpose	60
Appendix A: Stakeholder engagement with NSW public entities and private actors FY2024	66
Appendix B: NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner's Advisory Panel	70
Notes	71

Acknowledgement of Country

As New South Wales
Anti-slavery Commissioner,
I acknowledge that Aboriginal
and Torres Strait Islander
peoples are the first peoples
and traditional custodians
of Australia and the oldest
continuing culture in
human history.

I acknowledge that First
Nations communities in
New South Wales have
survived practices that today
we call modern slavery.

The legacies of that treatment continue to affect
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today,
and through them impact the New South Wales
community and economy.

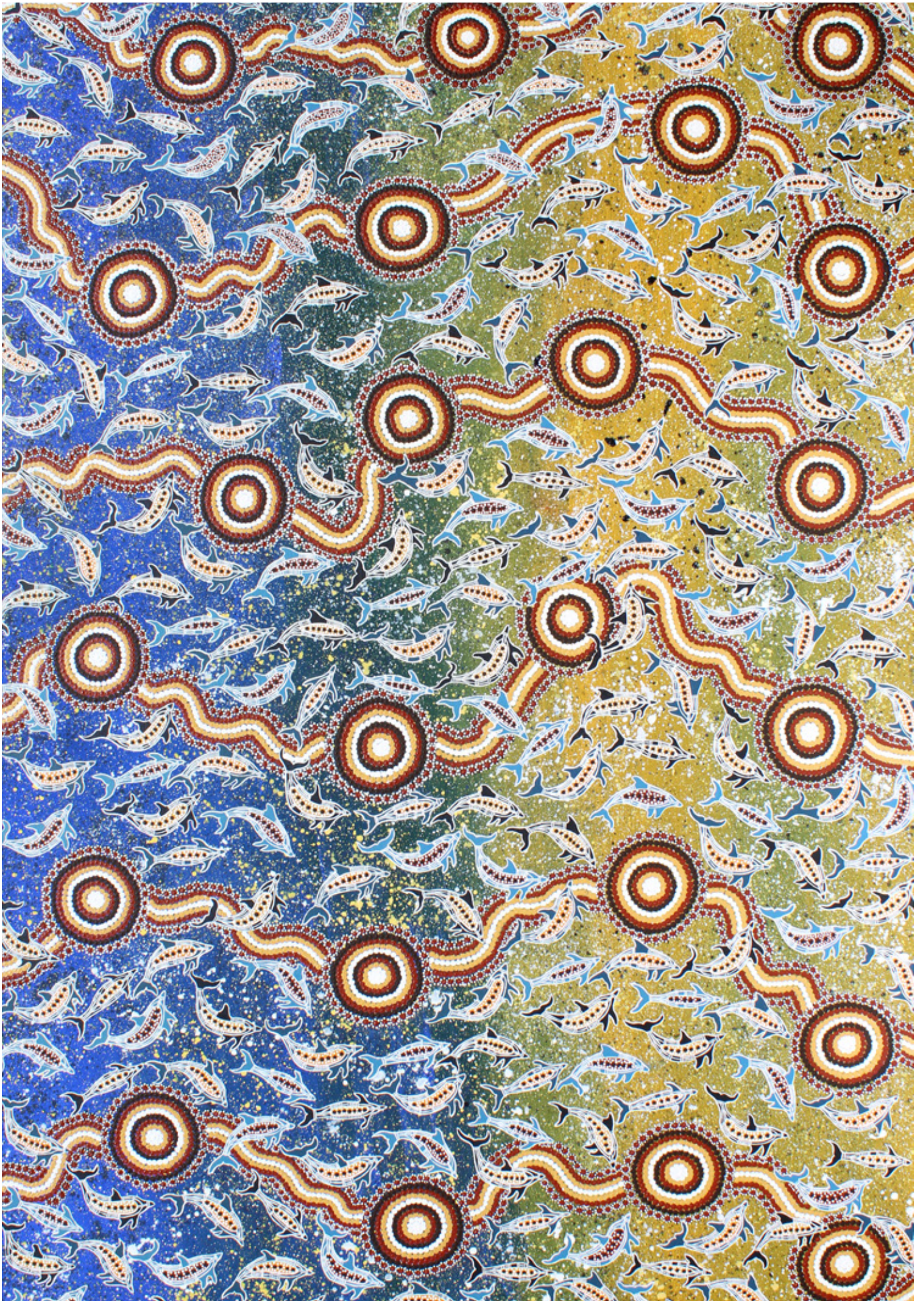
My Office and I pay our respects to elders past
and present and commit to respecting the lands
we walk on and the communities we walk with.

We celebrate the deep and enduring connection
of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
to Country and acknowledge their continuing
custodianship of the land, seas and sky.
We acknowledge their ongoing stewardship
and the important contribution they make to
our communities and economies.

We reflect on the continuing impact of government
policies and practices and recognise our responsibility
to work together with and for Aboriginal and Torres
Strait Islander peoples, families and communities
towards improved economic, social and cultural
outcomes, self-determination and for real freedom.

► Gawandi Dreaming (Dolphin Dreaming)

Gumbaynggirr/Dunghutti artist, Uncle Richard Campbell #28,
is a survivor of Kinchela Boys Home who continues to advocate for
healing from practices implemented at Kinchela outside Kempsey,
NSW that reflect what today would be called modern slavery.
This painting is part of his creation story.



Introduction from the Anti-slavery Commissioner



In 2023–2024 we took important steps towards a New South Wales that fully realises the human right to be free from modern slavery.

Most of these involved engagements aimed at building the systems and partnerships needed to make more substantive progress in years ahead in line with my Strategic Plan 2023–2026: Working Together for Real Freedom.

This report sets out our progress in this first year of implementation of that plan. It shows that together, the Office of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner and stakeholders are building communities and partnerships that will improve the State's ability to identify, prevent, address, and remedy modern slavery.

Yet important constraints on our action remain, relating to training of frontline workers, survivor co-design, funding, limited information-gathering capacity, and sector-wide collaboration.

Key achievements

Strategic Priority 1 – Build prevention capacity

In FY2024, my Office established a community of purpose to bring healthcare systems into the State's anti-slavery efforts. As required by the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW), we developed a hotline (1800 FREEDOM (1800 37 33 36)) that provided support and assistance to 56 victim-survivors and made 313 referrals. We raised awareness through seven visits to rural and regional NSW, laying the groundwork for a report to NSW Parliament on the vulnerability of temporary migrant workers in rural and regional NSW, published in FY2025. And we conducted concerted outreach to NSW universities to address the specific issue of the vulnerabilities to modern slavery faced by international students.

Strategic Priority 2 – Enable remedy

The Office provided leadership on effective engagement with survivors, centring survivor voices in our inaugural Anti-slavery Forum, and publishing Brave Space Guidelines that have quickly gained traction across the sector. We began working with Homes NSW to explore ways to expand survivors' access to housing. And we continued our engagement with First Nations groups to explore ways to tell the truth about the history of slavery in our state.

Strategic Priority 3 – Foster responsible business practices

We published detailed Guidance on Reasonable Steps to guide public procurement in NSW, and introduced the Shared Implementation Framework developed with reporting entities, including an Inherent Risk Identification Tool, model contracting, and model tender clauses. These are now being used by more than 400 NSW public entities, and also voluntarily by some ASX listed firms. We monitored reporting by public entities, and provided advice to them, private firms, and industry associations on effective modern slavery risk management and remediation. We worked with the Procurement Board to amend the NSW Supplier Code of Conduct. And we advanced work towards two Codes of Practice, on renewable energy and on investing, lending, and asset management. We also provided detailed policy inputs to the Modern Slavery Committee's inquiry relating to the textile, clothing, and footwear sector.

Strategic Priority 4 – Change the narrative

The Office engaged with the community across NSW and nationwide through roundtable discussions, regional visits, public meetings, online forums, interviews with prominent national, state, and local media outlets, expansion of its social media presence, and a suite of publications. I gave 62 speeches and presentations, speaking directly to more than 5,000 people. 89 percent of surveyed respondents attending OASC events indicated they were 'extremely motivated' or 'very motivated' to pursue anti-slavery efforts after attending the OASC event. I was interviewed 22 times by the media, and our work was mentioned 242 times on radio. There were almost 36,000 visits to our website. These initiatives collectively aim to shift the narrative and raise awareness of modern slavery throughout NSW. We also provided inputs to policy processes on issues including domestic, family, and sexual violence, e-safety, forced marriage and surrogacy.

Strategic Priority 5 – Develop a community of purpose

The Office organised the inaugural NSW Anti-slavery Forum, which brought together 281 anti-slavery practitioners and people with lived experience of modern slavery in a community of purpose. This included people from First Nations communities, government, business, community organisations, unions, service delivery, and from the legal, policy and academic arenas. I also convened a 29-person Advisory Panel that provided advice and counsel to me on achieving the goals of Working Together for Real Freedom. At the Anti-slavery Forum, sixteen members of the anti-slavery community of purpose received new Commissioner's Commendations for their outstanding contributions to addressing modern slavery. Recipients are featured throughout this report under the strategic priority for which they received the commendation. While we maintain a strong focus on continuous improvement, we were heartened to find in a year-end survey of almost 100 stakeholders that 80 percent of respondents indicated they were extremely or highly motivated to continue collaboration with the Office on anti-slavery efforts.

FY2024 by the numbers

Build prevention capacity

132

people who engaged with the *It's Healthy to Fight Modern Slavery* initiative

56

number of victims of modern slavery directly assisted by our hotline

313

referrals to service organisations

80%

of those surveyed who received support and assistance reported being 'extremely satisfied' or 'very satisfied'

Enable remedy

65

number of times people with lived experience engaged in OASC policy and programming processes

93%

of people with lived experience who, after participating in the inaugural Anti-slavery Forum, reported being 'extremely satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with levels of safety, respect and inclusion

313

referrals of survivors made

54

number of referrals for housing support

299

people trained by OASC on effective engagement with people with lived experience

Foster responsible business practices

16

number of modern slavery due diligence training sessions conducted by OASC for public entities

10,300

number of visits to the Guidance on Reasonable Steps webpage

31

average number of minutes spent on the OASC Guidance on Reasonable Steps webpage by each visitor

101

requests for advice and support from reporting entities between January and June 2024

32

number of presentations made to private sector actors

Change the narrative

62

speeches and presentations by the Commissioner

5,000+

people in NSW directly engaged in the Commissioner's speeches and presentations

22

interviews of the Commissioner in the media

400+

publications mentioning the Commissioner

242

mentions on radio

143,910

organic impressions from the OASC LinkedIn page

35,849

visits to the OASC website

89%

of surveyed attendees at OASC events who indicated that they were 'extremely motivated' or 'very motivated' to pursue anti-slavery efforts after attending an OASC event

87%

of those surveyed who said that after engaging with OASC their knowledge on modern slavery and effective response increased

7

number of visits to rural and regional locations in NSW by OASC personnel

24

number of engagements with First Nations stakeholders

Develop a community of purpose

281

number of attendees at the inaugural Anti-slavery Forum

5%

of attendees at the Anti-slavery Forum were people with disclosed lived experience of modern slavery

87%

of those attending the Anti-slavery Forum that were either 'extremely satisfied' or 'very satisfied'

82%

of respondents who found that the Anti-slavery Forum helped them make connections to other anti-slavery sector actors that they had not previously worked with

618

number of hours contributed by Advisory Panel members to OASC work

74%

of Advisory Panel members were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with their experience as members

Almost

6,000

number of people subscribed to OASC channels

Constraining factors

During FY2024, five factors emerged as constraints on progress in achieving the objectives set out in *Working Together for Real Freedom*, my Strategic Plan 2023–2026, which was developed through extensive stakeholder consultations in 2022–2023. Fortunately, in each case, there are opportunities to address these constraints. But this will require concerted action by the NSW Government, and by anti-slavery actors in business, unions, civil society and beyond.

1. A need for whole of government engagement

Achievement of nearly all the objects of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW) will require concerted government engagement. And not only by law enforcement and criminal justice actors, but also by health system actors, child protection officials, housing system providers, procurement actors, workplace regulators, school teachers, and local council officials.

There are good signs here. NSW Health is actively involved in our It's Healthy to Fight Modern Slavery initiative. My Office is in close consultation with Homes NSW on accommodation options for survivors. We also work closely with NSW Treasury on procurement capacity-building. Multiple government agencies are taking steps to tackle modern slavery risks in their supply-chains.

Yet at present none of the 32 Government Departments and agencies that we surveyed for this Annual Report are mandating training for frontline workers, though this is explicitly anticipated by section 19(3) of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW). Nor, six years after the adoption of the Act, is there any standing whole-of-government anti-slavery coordination mechanism driving its implementation.

More than half of the agencies surveyed have, however, indicated they would be happy to work with my Office to develop mandatory training for frontline workers. And likewise, many of the more than 420 government, local council, and other public entities with modern slavery due diligence and reporting obligations have expressed a clear appetite for further training and capacity-building, beyond what my Office is already rolling out in coordination with NSW Procurement.

2. A need to get serious about survivor co-design

FY2024 has proven something of a watershed year in terms of survivor participation in anti-slavery activities in NSW. But I have been struck by the difference between the way that the anti-slavery sector continues to consult with people with lived experience, and the norm of co-design that has emerged in other fields of public policy and service delivery that deal with vulnerable groups—such as disability, domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) and LGBTQIA+ issues. Survivors of modern slavery are still far too rarely invited to sit at decision-making tables, let alone be involved in co-delivery of programming.

Important steps have been taken in the last two years to provide survivors of modern slavery in Australia the opportunity to develop the policy engagement, advocacy, and broader participation skills they need to effectively and safely play this role. The Australian Government, for example, has shown leadership by funding a pilot Survivor Advisory Council, populated by graduates of a Lived Experience Engagement Programme run by The Salvation Army. But no member of this Council—or any other declared survivor—is a member of the National Roundtable on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking. Nor were any survivors included as members of the Working Group revising the existing National Roundtable Guidelines for NGOs on working with trafficked people.

There is certainly a need to ensure survivors are afforded adequate protections to be able to safely and meaningfully participate in policy processes and in business engagement. The NSW anti-slavery sector will need to follow the Australian Government's lead and put in place mechanisms that will equip survivors to participate in co-design, and, in time, co-delivery.

The opportunity here is for government, business, civil society, unions, and survivors themselves to come together to figure out how to do this. Businesses are increasingly looking for ways to safely engage survivors and those at risk of modern slavery in their supply-chains, in order to achieve the expectations of 'meaningful engagement' under the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. They may have an incentive to help support a mechanism that would help survivors develop the requisite skills and then match survivors to paying opportunities to use these skills. I intend to work with interested stakeholders, in calendar year 2025, to explore what this might look like—and how it can be co-designed and co-delivered by survivors themselves.

3. A need for dedicated resources

Seizing this and other opportunities to advance anti-slavery efforts in NSW in the coming years will require resources. At present, there is no dedicated budget line in the NSW State Budget Papers for anti-slavery work, whether for my Office or for other entities with relevant obligations and roles under the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW). These range from due diligence on supply-chains to the development of a system of support for victims of forced under-age marriage.

My Office's work is currently funded out of the budget of the Department of Communities and Justice. The Department has graciously committed to fund, until 2026–2027, 12 staff (not to include any Senior Executive level staff other than the Commissioner), \$417,500 in annual operating expenditure (not indexed for inflation), and funds to support certain IT expenditures (none of which have yet been released).

I continue to discuss resourcing needs with the Department and with NSW Government. When I was asked to model needs on taking up my role in August 2022, I modelled that 18 staff were needed at the outset, and 30 to 35 staff would be needed within two years, as our support and assistance and procurement monitoring functions ramped up. Now, two years in, we are still at 12 staff. The gap between this initial modelling and the current allocation of resources has made itself most apparent over the last year in three areas. These consist of not only support and assistance, and monitoring, as expected – but also training.

Support and assistance to survivors of modern slavery

The Office of the Anti-slavery Commissioner has c. 1.25 FTE allocated (across three staff roles) to provide assistance and support to survivors of modern slavery, as required by section 9(1)(b) of the Act. To date, we have provided support to more than 90 survivors (56 in FY2024). The resources allocated to this work include part of my own time – supervising all support and assistance work, and providing after-hours staffing of our hotline, 1800 FREEDOM. The complex requests for support and referral that we now receive – some of which involve active connections to organised crime, ongoing domestic violence matters, complex medical situations, and complex legal and immigration situations – clearly warrant more dedicated staff time. While my Office is not equipped to provide direct services to survivors, the Act's requirement that I provide "assistance and support" in practice frequently means working closely with survivors to understand their needs and referring them to suitable providers of accommodation, food, medical care, and legal and immigration advice.

This process of accompaniment and navigation requires spending time with survivors to listen and build trust. While my staff do everything we can to provide requested assistance and support, it is proving very difficult to sustainably deliver the function required by the Act, at current staffing levels, and without significant risks of staff burnout.

Monitoring and assistance to government agencies

We receive ongoing requests for support and assistance from government agencies and other public buyers to help them meet their statutory anti-slavery obligations. We anticipate receiving between 200 and 400 reports this financial year from covered agencies on their modern slavery due diligence efforts – reports I am statutorily obliged to monitor. We have less than 1 FTE that we can allocate to this monitoring work. With current resources we are also constrained in the training materials, online reporting portal features, and other forms of support that we can provide to reporting agencies – who frequently request such supports from us. Again, this lack of resources is a clear constraint on our ability to provide NSW Government agencies the support they are seeking to meet their statutory obligations.

Training

More than half of surveyed government agencies have indicated a desire to receive support to train frontline staff. Yet the Office currently has no staff resources that we can dedicate to training frontline workers.

4. No mandate to visit or inspect the worksites or living situations of people at risk of modern slavery

The *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW) makes clear that the Anti-slavery Commissioner has no investigative power or mandate in individual cases. Yet it requires the Commissioner to monitor the effectiveness of government laws, policies, and actions; and gives the Commissioner the function of providing support and assistance to victims of modern slavery.

During FY2024, we found that my inability to proactively inspect the worksites or living situations of people at risk of modern slavery is a constraining factor on my Office's ability to deliver progress against the Strategic Plan 2023–2026. It leaves me reliant on information that comes to me, and often dealing with partial information. I have also found that when I share this information with law enforcement or regulatory actors, they sometimes find it insufficient to form the basis of a formal investigation, often signalling the need for information that could only be gleaned by a site visit.

I encountered this issue when preparing my report on the situation of temporary migrant workers in New South Wales entitled *Be Our Guests*, which was presented to NSW Parliament under section 19(4) of the Act in September 2024. Several workers that I did refer to law enforcement and other authorities have in fact ended up on the federal government's Support to Trafficked People Programme. However, due to my inability to visit or inspect worksites or accommodation, I was unable to form a clear view on whether many others I encountered had been victims of modern slavery. This in turn made it difficult to know the extent of my statutory obligation of assistance and support, or to formulate precisely targeted policy recommendations. As a result, I ultimately concluded that a Parliamentary inquiry, benefiting from the Modern Slavery Committee's investigative capabilities, was desirable to resolve some of these issues. I welcome the decision of the Modern Slavery Committee to initiate such an inquiry, as announced in October 2024.

5. A need for collective action by the anti-slavery sector

To achieve the vision in our Strategic Plan 2023–2026 of a NSW that fully realises the human right to live free from modern slavery, close cooperation will be needed by a range of actors in the anti-slavery sector.

At present, the sector has only limited coordination mechanisms. There is no standing case management coordination system, which means that survivors often have to relive their trauma multiple times as they tell their story to different service providers when they seek support. There are no agreed accreditation or capability standards at the individual or organisational level, which means there is little to prevent people raising funds for 'anti-slavery' work that is not up to standard (since there are no formal sector benchmarks); and there are no rewards for organisations that invest in developing their own capabilities and practice (such as increased likelihood of access to funding). The lack of formal standards also means that survivors are often left powerless to deal with substandard treatment. As I have previously informed Parliament, while most service providers are deeply committed to their beneficiaries' well-being, I have also heard of serious abuses of power by service providers. There is no independent peak body or, in many cases, reliable independent complaints mechanism. There is no association of anti-slavery professionals. There is no annual, sector-wide collective fundraising ask. And as highlighted earlier, there is no collective sectoral initiative aimed at developing survivors' advocacy and participation skills, and then matching them to paying opportunities to use those skills.

These are all things that the sector can initiate, regardless of government action on the constraints mentioned above. As has been seen in adjacent sectors, such as Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence (DFSV) sector, and in the disability sector, mobilisation, coordination and professionalisation across the sector can have compounding benefits, both in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of policies and programming.

I look forward to working with like-minded partners, across the sector, in the coming years, to address these constraints on our progress.



“NSW is proudly playing a leadership role in the fight against modern slavery in Australia and globally. We were the first jurisdiction in the country to adopt a Modern Slavery Act, the first state with an independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and the first jurisdiction in the world with a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Modern Slavery. Much has been achieved but there’s much, much, much more to do.”

– The Hon. Michael Daley MP, NSW Attorney General

Recommendations

Section 19(2)(d) of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW) requires me to include, in this report “any recommendations for changes in the laws of the State, or for administrative action, that the Commissioner considers should be made as a result of the exercise of the Commissioner’s functions”.

Based on our progress during FY2024, and lessons learned about constraining factors, I offer seven recommendations:

Recommendations to NSW Government:

Recommendation 1: Form a taskforce to develop and implement mandatory anti-slavery training for frontline workers

The NSW Government should work with the Anti-slavery Commissioner to form a taskforce to develop and implement mandatory anti-slavery training for frontline public sector workers. This responds to the expectation of Parliament that Government will provide such training, in section 19(3)(a) of the Act. As discussed later in this Annual Report, almost 60 percent of surveyed frontline government agencies have indicated that they want to work with OASC to develop and roll out such training.

The taskforce should be mandated to work with relevant government agencies and external stakeholders, including people with lived experience, to

- Conduct a review of training needs
- Identify existing or new training opportunities and offerings
- Identify minimum training requirements or standards, or a system of training accreditation for frontline workers
- Organise a system or arrangement for frontline workers to have access to such training and/or accreditation.

The taskforce should consider:

- How frontline workers and their organisations can best be matched with suitable training providers (including people with lived experience)
- How such training can be sustainably funded. The taskforce should consider not only reliance on central government funding, but also a fee-for-service model, or the creation of a public-private partnership with relevant business entities to fund system upskilling
- How such training and accreditation can best be integrated into existing training and accreditation systems for frontline workers.

The taskforce should prepare a report that presents a costed business model for such a training arrangement to the NSW Government during 2025.

Recommendation 2: Allocate dedicated funding to the Anti-slavery Commissioner in the NSW State Budget Papers

At present the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner receives no dedicated funding in the NSW Budget Papers. Funding is provided out of the budget allocated to the Department of Communities and Justice. The NSW Government should, starting in the FY2025–2026 Budget, give the Anti-slavery Commissioner a dedicated and independent funding allocation. This should leave the Anti-slavery Commissioner no worse off than if the existing funding arrangement continued, factoring in corporate and overhead costs. This arrangement would strengthen the accountability of the Commissioner to the Parliament by making funding arrangements more transparent and improve Parliament and Government's ability to understand how funds are being used to discharge the Commissioner's functions.

Recommendation 3: Fully fund the support and assistance, and procurement monitoring functions of the Anti-slavery Commissioner

Although all parties committed at the last State election to 'fully fund' the work of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner, the funding currently made available to the Anti-slavery Commissioner has proven to constrain my ability effectively to discharge the statutory functions associated with the role. This is particularly notable in relation to two functions:

- i. provision of support and assistance to victims of modern slavery, including establishment and maintenance of a hotline; and
- ii. monitoring of public buyers' modern slavery due diligence and risk management.

The Office of the Commissioner has 1.25 FTE to provide complex support to victims, through a hotline; and around 1.0 FTE to monitor over 400 agencies' due diligence reporting. In both areas, demand for support from the Office currently significantly outstrips available resources. The overall Office staffing complement is now around 50 percent of what I modelled it would need to be, at this point, when I commenced in 2022.

The NSW Government should:

- 3.1 Immediately fund the appointment of six additional personnel to the Office of the Anti-slavery Commissioner in the Department of the Communities and Justice. This should include 1 Executive Director (Band 1), 2 Clerk Grade 9/10, 2 Clerk Grade 7/8, and 1 Clerk Grade 5/6 roles. This would reduce the gap between projected needs and current staff to around 25 percent, from 50 percent.
- 3.2 Work with my Office to agree State and third-party funding arrangements for 1800 FREEDOM, our assistance and support hotline. The Anti-slavery Commissioner is currently working with stakeholders, including the telecommunications industry, to present a detailed proposal to the NSW Government. The development of this proposal is however constrained by limited staffing, which could be addressed by immediate funding of the posts discussed in Recommendation 3.1.
- 3.3 Work with my Office and relevant NSW Government agencies to agree funding, hosting and management arrangements for a centralised, online Modern Slavery Procurement Portal. This would assist more than 420 NSW Government agencies and other entities with modern slavery due diligence and reporting obligations under NSW law

Recommendation to the NSW Parliament:

Recommendation 4: Amend the *Modern Slavery Act 2018 (NSW)* to give the Anti-slavery Commissioner limited inspection rights modelled on those of the Building Commissioner or a local council

The Modern Slavery Committee should, in its continuing review of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018 (NSW)*, move to equip the Anti-slavery Commissioner with limited inspection powers. These should not constitute full investigative powers but should allow the Anti-slavery Commissioner to proactively inspect suspected sites of modern slavery. These powers could be modelled on those given by statute to, for example, the NSW Building Commissioner, or to local councils. The addition of this power would improve the Commissioner's ability to prepare information and referrals for investigative, law enforcement and regulatory authorities that will lead to effective accountability and sanction, thereby improving deterrence and strengthening prevention.

Notification and recommendation to the NSW Department of Communities and Justice:

Recommendation 5: Form an internal working group to develop a forced marriage support system

Section 19(3)(c) of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW) anticipates that the Department of Communities and Justice will develop a system of support (including provision of accommodation) for victims of forced under-age marriage, irrespective of whether any offence against the victim has been prosecuted. The section requires me to report each year on Department of Communities and Justice action on this during the year.

More than two years after the commencement of this legislation, there is no such system of support yet in place.

I am hereby notifying the Department of Communities and Justice that the absence of such a system of support is a 'significant issue' in the operations of the Department. Consequently, under section 31(1)(a) of the Act, the NSW Department of Communities and Justice is obliged to provide a statement of the action taken in relation to this issue during FY2025 in annual reporting for that financial year.

I recommend that the NSW Department of Communities and Justice forms an internal working group, including members from all relevant divisions and operational areas, to work with the Anti-slavery Commissioner to develop this system of support.

Recommendation to the NSW anti-slavery sector:

Recommendation 6: Work with the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner, beginning in 2025, to develop a survivor expertise platform

The NSW anti-slavery sector should work with the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner, and with survivors and other stakeholders, beginning in 2025, to develop a platform that:

- Helps survivors develop engagement, policy advocacy, and business training expertise, and
- Matches demand for these services (from business, government, civil society, researchers or other stakeholders) to supply (from survivors) through safe, monitored and appropriately paying opportunities.

The mechanism itself should be co-designed with survivors, and so far as possible also co-delivered by survivors.

Recommendation 7: Take steps to mobilise and professionalise the anti-slavery sector

The NSW anti-slavery sector should convene to consider options for:

- Improved case management coordination
- Development of enforceable service standards, or a service charter – and not merely voluntary 'guidelines'
- Development of an accreditation mechanism for service provider organisations and/or professionals
- Development of a standing peak body to coordinate policy advocacy and potentially fund-raising.

I stand ready to assist efforts by the sector in this regard in the years ahead.

Dr James Cockayne
NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner

Strategic Plan 2023–2026

This page summarises the Anti-slavery Commissioner’s Strategic Plan 2023–2026, *Working Together for Real Freedom*.

Vision: A New South Wales that fully realises the human right to live free from slavery.

Our priorities

Build prevention capacity	Enable remedy	Foster responsible business practices	Change the narrative	Develop a community of purpose
----------------------------------	----------------------	--	-----------------------------	---------------------------------------

Our objectives

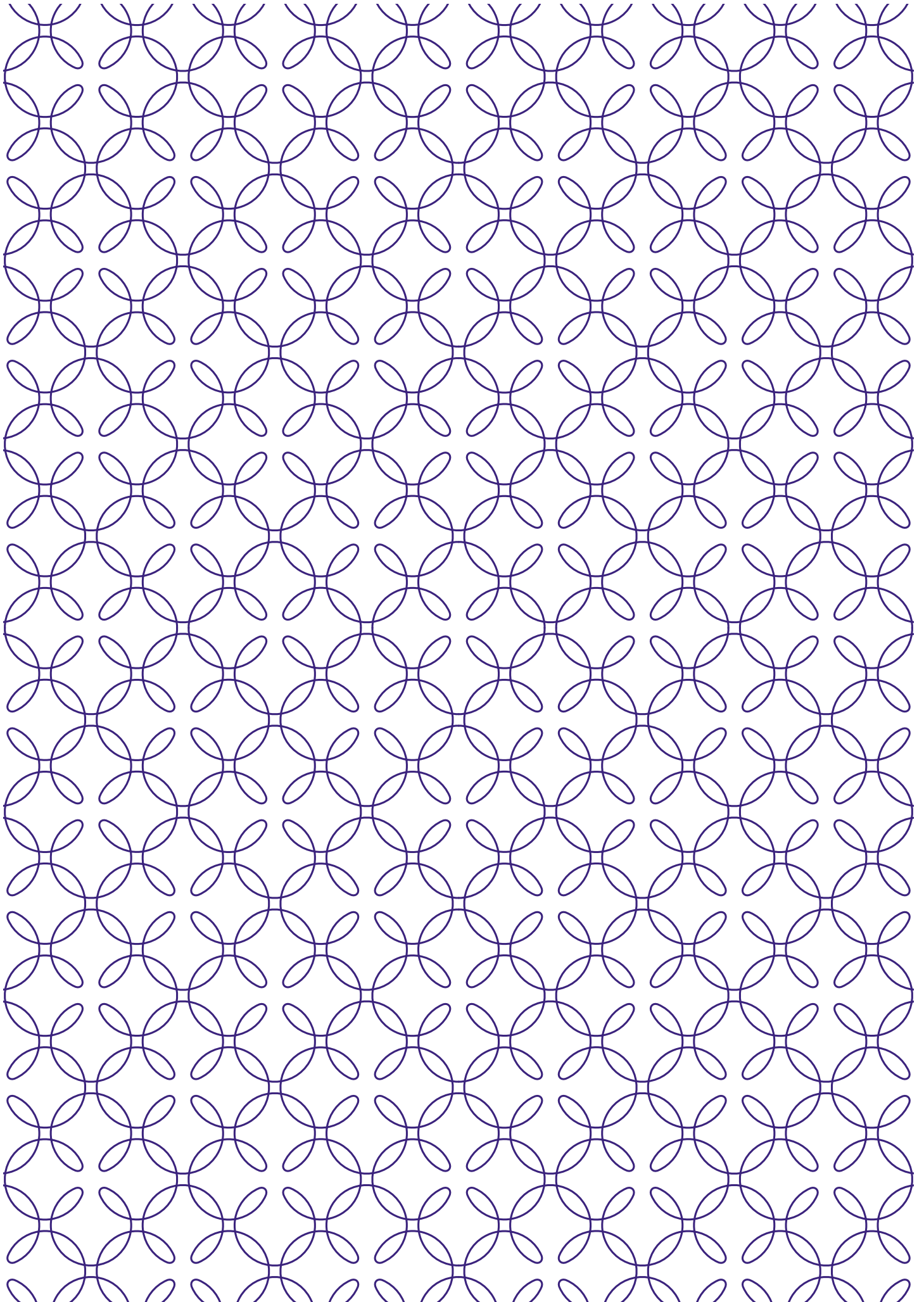
To ensure NSW government and non-government systems can identify vulnerability to modern slavery and prevent victimisation.	To improve access for people with lived experience to effective remedy – including essential services, justice, self-determination and empowerment.	To show leadership in identifying and addressing modern slavery in supply chains and investment portfolios.	To make the case for anti-slavery in a convincing and empowering way.	To lay the foundations for sustainable and inclusive implementation of the Modern Slavery Act 2018 (NSW).
---	---	---	---	---

Our actions

Equip frontline workers. Establish an effective support and referral hotline.	Strengthen access to effective remedy. Foster survivor leadership.	Remove products of modern slavery from public procurement. Foster responsible business practices in the private sector.	Raise awareness across NSW in a way that empowers survivors. Build the business and policy cases for anti-slavery.	Organise an inclusive community of purpose. Ensure the sustainability of efforts under the Act.
--	---	--	---	--

Our core values

Respect for people • Collaboration and partnership • Innovating based on evidence
Transparency, honesty and integrity • Independence



Modern slavery in New South Wales

Modern slavery occurs when one person treats another as if they owned them – restricting their freedom.

Modern slavery includes various forms of exploitation. These are defined in the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW) ('the Act'), which also references the *Criminal Code Act 1995* (Cth) and the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW). These include slavery, servitude, sexual servitude, forced labour, forced marriage, debt bondage, trafficking in persons, deceptive recruiting for labour or services, organ and tissue trafficking, and certain forms of child abuse.

The High Court of Australia has ruled that the use of the 'powers of ownership' is central to the prohibition of slavery in Australian law.¹ When a person is subject to modern slavery, their freedoms are restricted, and their dignity and agency are undermined. This can be a result of various forms of coercion, fraud and violence, such as grooming, deception, threats, coercive control, restriction of movement, fraudulent debt, wage theft, or violence.

Around 40 per cent of people in modern slavery in Australia are estimated to be in NSW.

Globally, there are close to 50 million people in modern slavery.² By the best available estimates, around 1,500³ to 41,000⁴ of these people are in Australia – and available data on reporting and service provision suggests 600 to 16,400 of these are in NSW.

While anybody can become a victim of modern slavery, some individuals are rendered more vulnerable in certain contexts, due to their age, their migration status, gender or sexual identity, language skills, disability, poverty, homelessness, or other factors. So modern slavery may coincide with other forms of exploitation and abuse – domestic and family violence, coercive control, child abuse, gender-based violence, online abuse, and workplace offences.

Modern slavery results from the failure of our systems to identify vulnerability and to prevent and remedy exploitation

Modern slavery happens when our legal, financial, procurement, healthcare, immigration, child protection and other systems fail to identify vulnerability to exploitation and fail to prevent and address it.

Convictions for modern slavery offences are very difficult to secure. Nationally, there have been fewer than 40 convictions for these offences, though there were, for example, 1,463 reports of modern slavery to the Australian Federal Police in the five years from FY2020 to FY2024.⁵

Modern slavery imposes significant economic and social costs on NSW

All of this imposes real costs and limits the contribution that people with lived experience of modern slavery can make to society and the community. Modern slavery in NSW likely costs us at least \$956 million – and perhaps as much as \$9.6 billion.⁶

People with lived experience of modern slavery suffer serious and enduring impacts on their mental, physical, social, emotional, and economic wellbeing. Modern slavery takes a toll on education and career development, earning capacity, and a survivor's family and community. The effects of trauma can impact down through subsequent generations.

The impacts of modern slavery also ripple out through society and the economy. Modern slavery reduces productivity and innovation, increases inequality and poverty, and breeds corruption.⁷

Modern slavery offences in NSW

Modern slavery includes various forms of exploitation. The Act defines a modern slavery offence as:

- a. an offence described in Schedule 2,
- b. an offence of attempting, or of incitement, to commit an offence described in Schedule 2,
- c. conduct engaged in elsewhere than in New South Wales that, if it occurred in New South Wales, would constitute a modern slavery offence under paragraph (a) or (b).

The offences in Schedule 2 of the Act include offences under the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW), the *Human Tissue Act 1983* (NSW) and the Commonwealth Criminal Code:

These broadly include the following offences:

- slavery
- servitude
- sexual servitude
- forced labour
- forced marriage
- certain forms of child abuse, including administration of a digital platform used to disseminate certain child exploitation materials
- debt bondage
- trafficking in persons
- deceptive recruiting for labour or services
- organ and tissue trafficking

About the Office of the Anti-slavery Commissioner

Values

The core values that underpin the work of the Office of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner are:

- Respect for people
- Collaboration and partnership
- Innovating based on evidence
- Transparency, honesty and integrity
- Independence

Mandate

The mandate of the NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner is established by the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW) ('the Act'). The Commissioner's functions are set out in section 9 and include:

- a. to advocate for and promote action to combat modern slavery,
- b. to identify and provide assistance and support for victims of modern slavery,
- c. to make recommendations and provide information, advice, education and training about action to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute offences involving modern slavery,
- d. to co-operate with or work jointly with persons and organisations to combat modern slavery and provide assistance and support to victims of modern slavery,
- e. to monitor reporting concerning risks of modern slavery occurring in supply chains of government agencies,
- f. to monitor the effectiveness of legislation and governmental policies and action in combating modern slavery,
- g. to raise community awareness of modern slavery,
- h. to exercise other key functions conferred or imposed by the Act.

The Commissioner also has public awareness and advice functions generally and in relation to supply chains, set out in sections 12 and 28 of the Act, respectively.

In addition to the above functions, the mandate of the Commissioner under the Act includes:

- preparing a strategic plan that sets out how the Commissioner proposes to exercise the Commissioner's function (section 11),
- referral of matters to police and other agencies in the State and elsewhere (section 13),
- cooperation between the Commissioner and NSW agencies, other persons and organisations (sections 14–15),
- consulting with the Auditor-General and the NSW Procurement Board to monitor the effectiveness of due diligence procedures by government agencies (section 25),
- keeping of a public register (section 26),
- developing and making publicly available codes of practice for the purpose of providing guidance in identifying modern slavery taking place within the supply chains of organisations (section 27),
- raising issues with certain agencies about their operations (section 31) and
- receiving reporting from over 400 public entities on their reasonable steps to ensure they do not purchase products of modern slavery (section 31).



Call 1800 FREEDOM (1800 37 33 36)
for confidential support and advice
for victims of modern slavery



The Office of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner team in FY2024.

Office of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner

The NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner is an independent statutory office, appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the Executive Council, which reports directly to NSW Parliament.

The Commissioner's work is supported by the NSW Department of Communities and Justice through yearly funding. Since its establishment, the Office currently has 12 employees working across four teams that support the delivery of the Commissioner's functions.

The teams are:

The **Business and Human Rights Team** leads the Office's work in fostering responsible commercial conduct in NSW and supporting more than 420 NSW public entities to meet their modern slavery due diligence and reporting obligations under the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW). This includes assisting the Commissioner in the implementation of the Guidance on Reasonable Steps to Manage Modern Slavery Risks in Operations and Supply-Chains. The team also provides expert legal advice to the Commissioner and the Office generally.

The **Communications and Engagement Team** supports the Commissioner's general awareness raising functions and ensures effective communication and engagement by the Office. This includes engagement with media and

stakeholders, as well as management of the Office's publications, website, and social media channels. The team also includes a Lived Experience Practice Lead, who ensures the inclusion of lived experience and expertise in the Office's work, policies, and projects, as well as fostering survivor leadership in anti-slavery work.

The **Executive Team** supports the Office's business administration, including management of finances, correspondence, the Commissioner's Advisory Panel, the Anti-slavery Forum, referrals, and events. This team also leads the Office's Support and Assistance Team, whose trauma-informed practice accompanies victims of modern slavery to support and assistance. Recognising the challenging and potentially traumatic nature of the work, the Support Enquiries Team and the Commissioner participate in mandatory clinical supervision.

The **Policy and Projects Team** assists the Commissioner in executing policy-related functions, including monitoring the effectiveness of government laws and actions. The team works with a diverse range of stakeholders to lead, develop, and support the implementation of innovative policies and programs to combat modern slavery in NSW. They also oversee the implementation of several projects that the Office is leading.

Overview of this report's structure

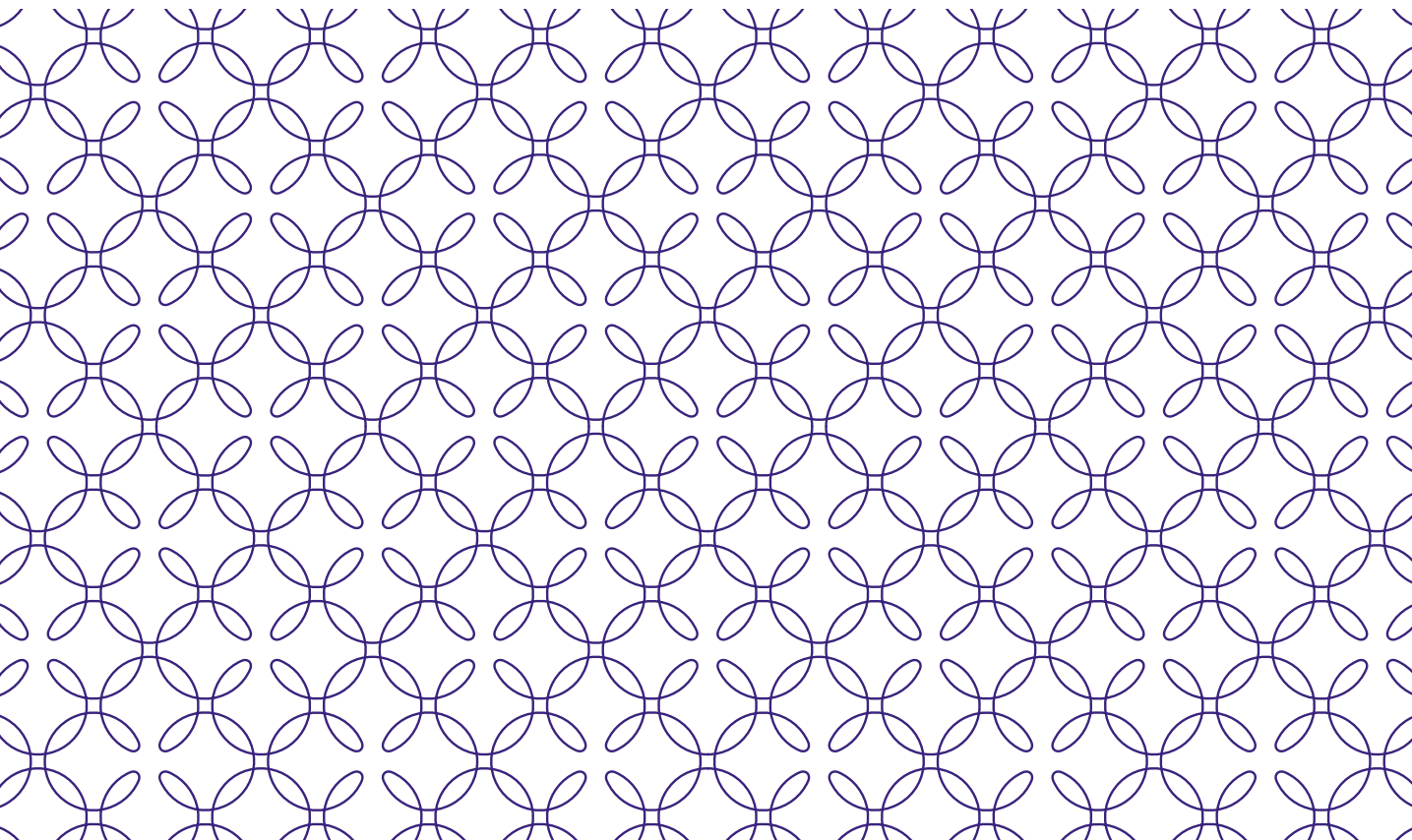
The *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW) requires the Commissioner's annual report to include a description of the Commissioner's activities during the year in relation to each of the Commissioner's functions, and a review of progress on implementation of the strategic plan relevant to the period to which the report relates (section 19(1) and (2)).

The Commissioner's first strategic plan – ***Working Together for Real Freedom*** – was published in June 2023. The Plan sets out the Commissioner's roadmap for anti-slavery action in NSW, including his key objectives and priorities, for the period 2023 to 2026.

This is the first annual report that is specifically mandated to report against that Strategic Plan 2023–2026. The report is therefore organised into sections that correspond to the five strategic priorities set out in *Working Together for Real Freedom*. Each section includes: a table identifying which of the Commissioner's functions under the Act underpin the reported activities; an overview of the outcomes achieved; and a description of the activities undertaken during FY2024 related to the strategic priority.

Build prevention capacity

Commissioner’s statutory functions and responsibilities	Section under the Act
Make recommendations and provide information, advice, education and training about action to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute offences involving modern slavery	9(1)(c)
Provide advice, education and training on ways to prevent modern slavery taking place and assist the victims of modern slavery	12(1)(b)
Report annually to NSW Parliament on the extent to which the government has provided mandatory training on modern slavery to front-line government agencies and the public generally during the year	19(3)(a)
Report annually to NSW Parliament on the extent which the NSW Government has implemented changes in the information and communications technology use policies applicable to government agencies to prohibit the viewing of child abuse material and provided clear guidelines for responding to failures to comply with those policies during the year	19(3)(c)



Objective 1:

To ensure NSW government and non-government systems can identify vulnerability to modern slavery and prevent victimisation.

An estimated 80–98% of modern slavery cases go unreported in NSW.⁸

Frontline workers are critical in identifying modern slavery. Many victims access frontline services while in situations of exploitation, though they often go unidentified as victims of modern slavery by those service providers. Improving the capacity of NSW government and non-government systems to identify vulnerability to modern slavery is therefore essential to preventing victimisation and assisting people experiencing exploitation.

Throughout FY2024, the OASC focused on developing a project aimed at equipping frontline healthcare workers in NSW to better identify and assist people at risk of or experiencing modern slavery, and on developing the Office's own capacity to provide support and assist through a hotline. We also undertook ongoing outreach to NSW-based universities, to address the 'significant issue' of the vulnerability of international students.

This section of the Annual Report also includes reporting required under section 19(3) of the Act, relating to certain actions taken by NSW Government agencies.

By the numbers

132

people who engaged with the *It's Healthy to Fight Modern Slavery* initiative

56

number of victims of modern slavery helped by our hotline

313

referrals to service organisations

80%

of those surveyed who received support and assistance reported being 'extremely satisfied' or 'very satisfied'

Commendations

A/Prof Bassina Farbenblum and A/Prof Laurie Berg,
Co-Executive Directors, Migrant Justice Institute

Strategic Priority 1–Achievement in Building
Prevention Capacity

Strategic Priority 5–Developing a Community
of Purpose

Commended for their leadership of the Migrant Justice
Institute and their successful advocacy to improve
protections for migrant workers.



Laurie Berg



Bassina Farbenblum

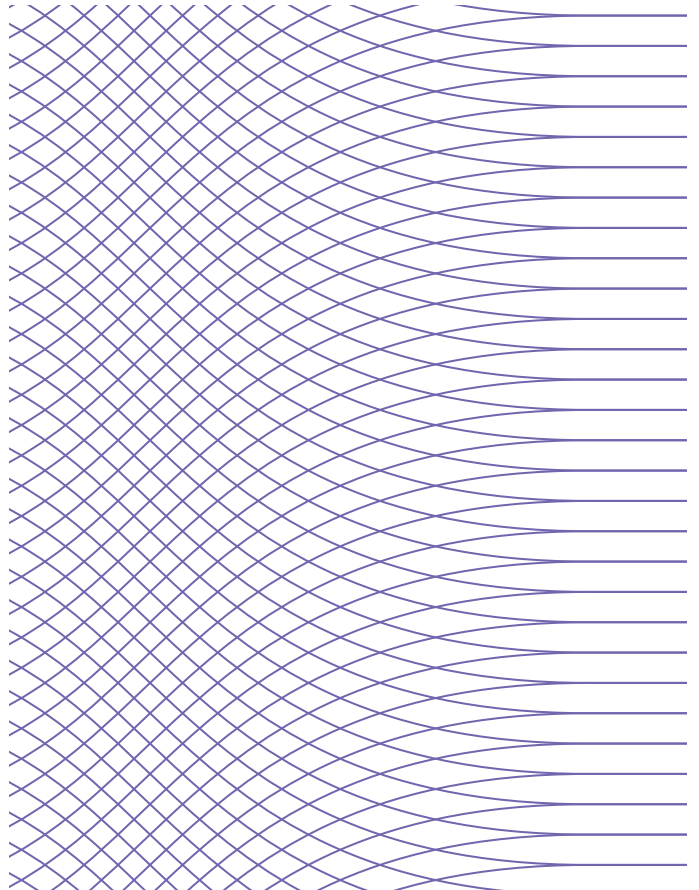


Tarang Jain

Tarang Jain, Modern Slavery Liaison Officer, St
Vincent’s Health Australia

Strategic Priority 1–Achievement in Building
Prevention Capacity

Commended for his work to strengthen anti-slavery
capabilities in the healthcare system.



Action: Equip frontline workers

It's Healthy to Fight Modern Slavery

Healthcare workers are a powerful force in the fight against modern slavery. For the estimated 16,400 people living in modern slavery in NSW, an interaction with a healthcare provider could be the first step on their journey to freedom and recovery.

International research has shown that 68% of people who have been trafficked are seen by a healthcare provider at least once during their period of exploitation.⁹ This means that every day, healthcare workers in NSW may encounter people experiencing or at risk of exploitation without even realising it – in emergency departments, sexual health clinics, and through services such as maternal and child health, mental health, refugee health, homelessness health, domestic and family violence, and drug and alcohol support.

People who have experienced modern slavery have higher rates of disease, lower life expectancies, higher rates of mental health concerns – and their trauma transfers inter-generationally. As well as the lasting impact on individuals, families, and communities, this results in an estimated \$8.5 billion in lifetime healthcare costs for the NSW health system.

Recognising the critical role that frontline healthcare workers can play in identifying and assisting people at risk of or experiencing modern slavery, the OASC initiated a new project called It's Healthy to Fight Modern Slavery. The project was launched in March 2024 with a webinar that brought together more than 100 diverse stakeholders and featured the Chair of the NSW Modern Slavery Committee Dr Joe McGirr MP, international experts Dr Amanda Stylianou and Dr Hanni Stoklosa from HEAL Trafficking, nurse and lived experience expert Sarah S, and emergency medicine and modern slavery researcher Dr Jamie Burrows from NSW Health.

Convened by the OASC, It's Healthy to Fight Modern Slavery brings together professionals from across the NSW healthcare system and experts from the anti-slavery sector in a community of purpose to facilitate effective prevention of and responses to modern slavery in healthcare settings. The multi-disciplinary group, including healthcare practitioners, representatives from non-government organisations, academics, people with lived expertise, and independent experts, held its first meeting in June 2024. Over the course of FY2025, the group will work together to develop coordinated approaches to key areas such as education and training, identification tools and protocols, and referral pathways across the NSW healthcare sector.



Dr Jamie Burrows, emergency physician and modern slavery researcher, NSW Health, speaks on a panel about training of frontline workers at the Anti-slavery Forum in May 2024 in Sydney.



The Commissioner and members of the OASC team meet with representatives from Macquarie University to discuss the university's due diligence procurement obligations and the vulnerabilities of international students to modern slavery in March 2024 in Sydney.

Action: Outreach to frontline community and university workers

As members of the Office travelled around NSW during FY2024, it became clear that many frontline workers in community service provision contexts—including healthcare, family support, community legal centre and housing—are also encountering people who may be victims of modern slavery. But these frontline workers often lack training in identifying people with lived experience of modern slavery and limited knowledge of referral options. They also struggle to know what to do with the information they have gleaned, because information systems frequently do not account for modern slavery.

One of the most vulnerable cohorts in NSW is the large pool of international students. OASC has provided statutory assistance and support to many international students who have suffered modern slavery in NSW. For that reason, in October 2023, the Commissioner wrote to the ten universities that have reporting obligations under the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW) and formally notified them that the vulnerability of international students is a 'significant issue in their operations'. This had the effect of triggering certain reporting obligations for those universities.

To assist frontline workers in communities and universities, we conducted outreach throughout FY2024. This included meeting with frontline workers in Bomaderry, Coffs Harbour, Griffith, and Wollongong. The OASC held a workshop with Illawarra and Shoalhaven-based service providers to discuss how local organisations can work together to better identify modern slavery and capture statistical insights to monitor vulnerabilities in the area. In FY2024, the Commissioner and his team also met with Charles Sturt University, Macquarie University, University of NSW, University of Technology Sydney, and University of Wollongong to discuss modern slavery risks for international students.

Action: Establish an effective support and referral hotline

During FY2024, significant energy was devoted to increasing and improving the Office's capacity to respond to requests for support and assistance from people who are experiencing or have survived modern slavery. Over the last year, a pilot hotline service has been established, as required by section 12(d) of the Act. There has been a steadily increasing number of people contacting the Office in search of information and support. The Office has been working to transition this arrangement to a more formalised helpline set up and secure appropriate resourcing from government. This work continues in FY2025.

Requests for support and assistance are rising in number and complexity

During the past year, the OASC has received a growing number of requests for support and assistance from people experiencing, or who have survived modern slavery. Between 1 July 2023 and 30 June 2024, the Office received 50 formal requests for assistance and support to survivors, involving 56 individuals. Coming from people from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds and nationalities, most enquiries received during the reporting period related to individuals at risk of, or who experienced, trafficking, sexual servitude, deceptive recruiting, and forced labour.

Approximately half of all enquiries involved temporary migrant workers facing exploitation and associated impacts related to modern slavery. Notably, the Office received a significant number of requests for support from workers from the Pacific Islands who had disengaged from the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility

Scheme, with the majority contacting the Office from rural and regional areas in NSW and other states. These included women, some of whom were either pregnant or caring for newborns, who required urgent sexual and reproductive healthcare, accommodation, and safety from further exploitation. The Commissioner reported on this issue to NSW Parliament in FY2025, in the *Be Our Guests* report. This report triggered the initiation of a formal inquiry by the Modern Slavery Committee in October 2024.

In addition to presentations linked to forced labour, the Office received an increased number of calls related to workers' rights violations. While these do not involve modern slavery, they nonetheless require provision of information and assistance to connect people with appropriate services to ensure safe employment conditions.

During the last year, the OASC has been developing its capabilities, systems, and protocols for responding to assistance and support requests in a timely, trauma-informed, and effective manner. A Support and Assistance team, which includes the Commissioner, has been created within the Executive Team. Constituting approximately 1.25 FTE (including part of the Commissioner's time), this team endeavours to provide a needs-based and trauma-informed response to each approach that is identified (in accordance with defined criteria) as a formal enquiry, including providing information about and contact details for relevant local services within the relevant jurisdiction. In FY2024, the Office made a total of 313 referrals to other organisations and services, including for legal



A workshop with Illawarra and Shoalhaven-based service providers to discuss how local organisations can work together to better identify modern slavery in April 2024 in Wollongong.

assistance, healthcare, and migration support. Notably, 54 referrals were specifically related to housing and homelessness services.

For some complex and multi-layered enquiries, the Office adopts a more detailed approach. This involves formal requests for information and collaboration with both government and non-government agencies, leveraging the Commissioner's powers to seek information and assistance under the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW).

1800 FREEDOM

As part of efforts to develop the Office's support and assistance capabilities, the existing phonenumber support and assistance capability was converted to 1800 FREEDOM (1800 37 33 36). This number went live in FY2025. In a first, deliberately targeted step to promote the phone number, the OASC partnered with the NSW Government's newly formed agency Homes NSW to co-design construction site signage, which provides critical information on labour exploitation and guidance on accessing support. The signage, translated into Arabic and Chinese, will be displayed on 40 Homes NSW construction sites across metro and regional NSW, starting from 1 July 2024, for the duration of construction. The signage will then be relocated to new sites to continue raising awareness among workers.

Throughout FY2024, the Office also conducted research and consultations to explore both the needs and traits of potential hotline users, and the resourcing needs for development and maintenance of a suitable hotline capability. To date this has included: extensive consultation with relevant local and overseas hotlines working with vulnerable populations; a desk-based review of relevant grey literature; and consultations with local telecommunications providers and industry bodies. In parallel, we have developed the technology stack in use in our existing hotline capability and developed detailed workflow guidelines. The Office's Lived Experience Practice Lead has played a key role in this process.

This work remains ongoing. The Office anticipates further consultations with anti-slavery sector, government, and telecommunications industry stakeholders in FY2025, to develop a business case to put to NSW Government for further development of this hotline.



Naveen Chandra, Executive Director, Housing Portfolio, Homes NSW and Dr James Cockayne, NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner, visit a Homes NSW construction site in Newcastle where new signage promoting 1800 FREEDOM is displayed.

Case study

*Note: names and other details have been changed to protect privacy and confidentiality.

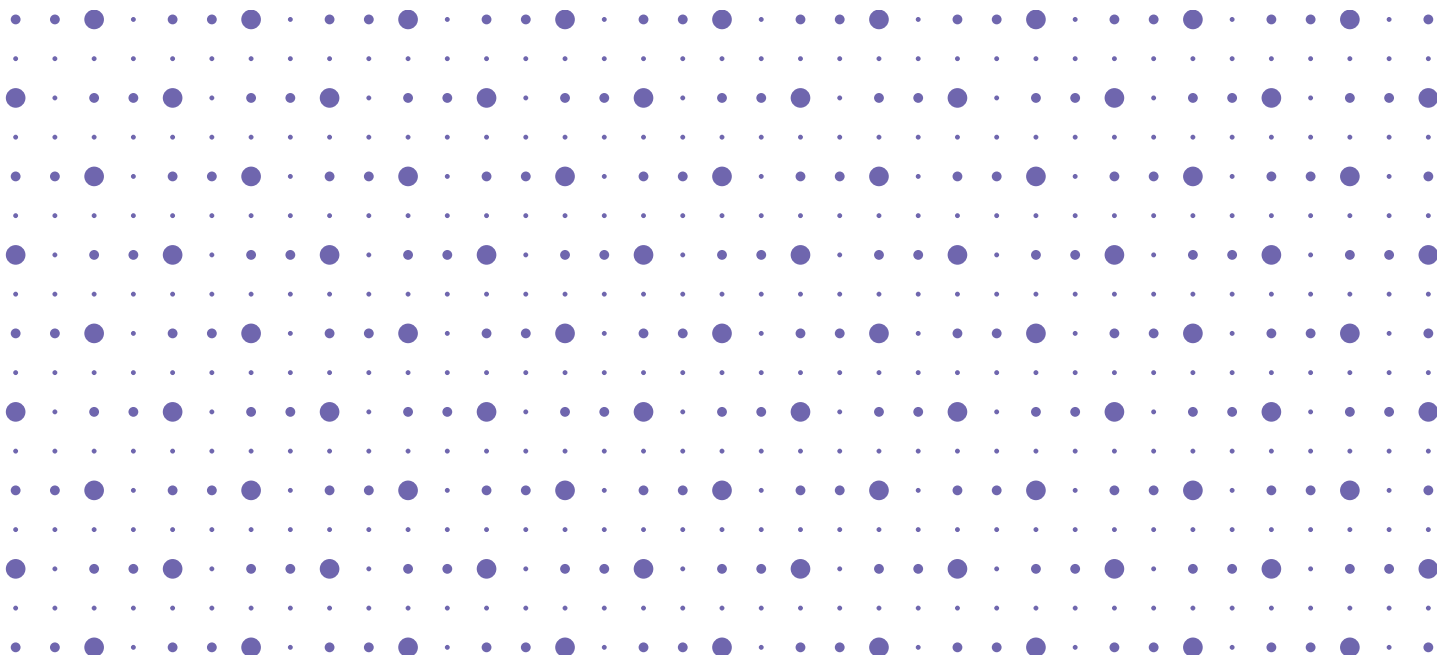
Kala* is a young Pacific Islander woman who was recruited under the Pacific Australian Labour Mobility Scheme (PALM) to work on farms picking berries. Kala travelled to Australia alone. Her transport, accommodation, wages, visa, and payslips in Australia were managed by Bobcat*, a labour hire organisation, that was formerly an Approved Employer under the PALM Scheme. She arrived in Tasmania and was given only three months of work before Bobcat transferred the PALM workers to Queensland to work on another farm.

While in Tasmania, Kala had \$120 per week rent deducted from her pay to live in overcrowded accommodation on dirt floors with many other PALM workers. After deductions for rent, transport and health insurance, Kala was only left with \$100 weekly. She did not receive superannuation. Bobcat also withheld Kala's payslips and she could not trace the cost of deductions and wages taken.

Kala was transferred to work near the Queensland border, and slept in an employer-provided facility on the NSW side of the border, in a converted abattoir. She was then moved to western Victoria, and eventually landed in Western Australia. She contacted the Office of the NSW Anti-slavery via SMS to seek support and assistance. Kala presented as three months pregnant, experiencing homelessness, food insecurity, not having access to health services, and risked deportation as she was an undocumented migrant with an expired PALM subclass 403 visa. She was not eligible for Medicare, health care, Centrelink, social services, or accommodation. Prior to approaching OASC, Kala had applied for a Bridging Visa without access to legal support and with low English levels to process her application. Kala's initial application was rejected, and her appeal was also unsuccessful. As an undocumented migrant, Kala was too fearful of deportation to report to authorities what had happened to her or seek help.

Women in Kala's situation experience high risks of sexual violence and coercion, when faced with homelessness, inadequate income, crowded and unsafe living arrangements, visa insecurity, and frequent removal to unfamiliar, isolated locations. Over several months, the Office's Support and Assistance team provided Kala with assistance and support to find safe pathways for herself and her unborn child. The Office faced multiple barriers in arranging referrals and finding an organisation willing to provide services or case management. The ten warm referrals ranged from crisis accommodation, women's health centres, and legal, government, and non-government services. Many service providers refused support on the grounds that Kala was not a victim of domestic and family violence (as they understood it); did not have a valid visa; or could not access Medicare or Centrelink.

For several months, the Support and Assistance team provided daily engagement and support. Kala's limited access to the internet meant that much communication had to be conducted via SMS and telephone. The Office was successful in linking Kala with emergency food, crisis accommodation, a free legal service to process her visa application, and also secured case management and ongoing prenatal support.



NSW Government actions on prevention

Section 19(3) of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW) requires the Commissioner to provide, in this Annual Report, a review of:

- (a) the extent to which the government of NSW has provided mandatory training on modern slavery to front-line government agencies and the public generally during the year,
- (b) the extent to which the government of NSW has implemented changes in the information and communications technology use policies applicable to government agencies to prohibit the viewing of child abuse material and provided clear guidelines for responding to failures to comply with those policies during the year.

The agencies surveyed were:

- Aboriginal Affairs
- Aboriginal Housing Office
- Anti-Discrimination NSW
- Corrective Services NSW
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- Department of Communities and Justice
- Department of Creative Industries, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport
- Department of Customer Service
- Department of Education
- Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
- Fire and Rescue NSW
- Health Care Complaints Commission
- Judicial Commission of NSW
- Law Enforcement Conduct Commission
- Legal Aid NSW
- NSW Ageing and Disability Commission
- NSW Ambulance
- NSW Fair Trading
- NSW Health
- NSW Independent Casino Commission
- NSW Police Force
- NSW Registry of Birth, Deaths and Marriages
- NSW State Coroner's Court
- NSW State Emergency Services
- Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People
- Office of the Children's Guardian
- Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions
- Port Authority of NSW
- Rural Fire Service
- TAFE NSW
- Transport for NSW

27 of these agencies responded to the Office's questions.

NSW Government training on modern slavery

The Office surveyed 32 Government agencies that have frontline staff or workers. For the purpose of this survey, a 'frontline' worker was understood as any person who interacts directly with members of the public in the workplace as part of their duties. These workers are typically the main points of contact between a customer, client, service beneficiary, or member of the public, and the organisation. This general definition would encompass the specific definitions provided in section 60AA of the *Crimes Act 1900* (NSW) of 'frontline emergency worker' and 'frontline health worker'.

Figure 1: Overall responses from NSW Government agencies to OASC request for information

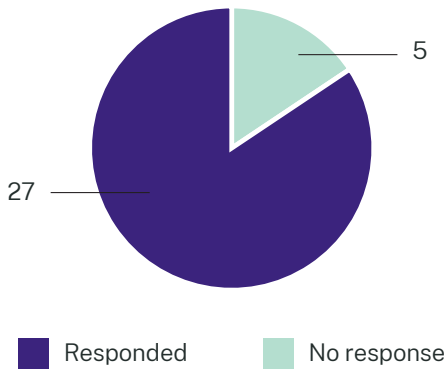
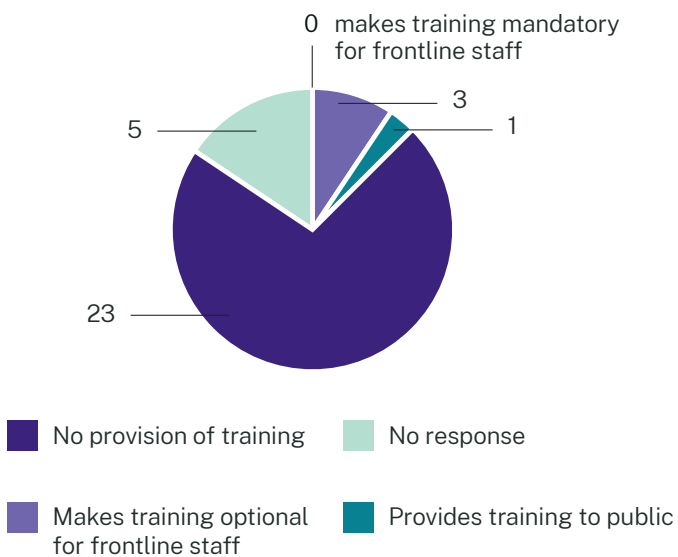


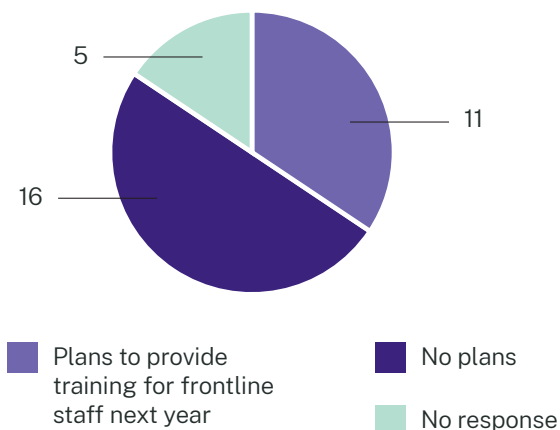
Figure 2: Information provided by NSW Government agencies regarding mandatory modern slavery training for frontline staff



23 agencies indicated that they currently provide no training on modern slavery for frontline staff. Three make training optional for frontline staff. One provides training to the public. As of now, notably, none (0) make training mandatory for frontline staff. Five agencies provided no response.

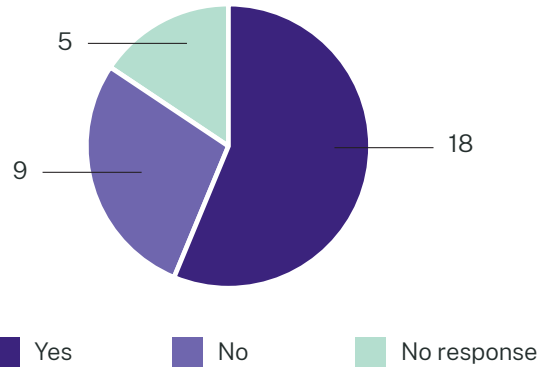
The Office also asked about training intentions for the coming years.

Figure 3: Information provided by NSW Government agencies regarding training intentions for FY2025



16 agencies' responses indicated that they were not yet actively planning training on modern slavery for frontline workers, while 11 agencies are. But when asked if they would be interested to work with the Office to develop and implement such training, these numbers essentially reversed: 18 said they would be so interested, and 9 demonstrated no interest.

Figure 4: Interest from NSW Government agencies in working with OASC to develop training



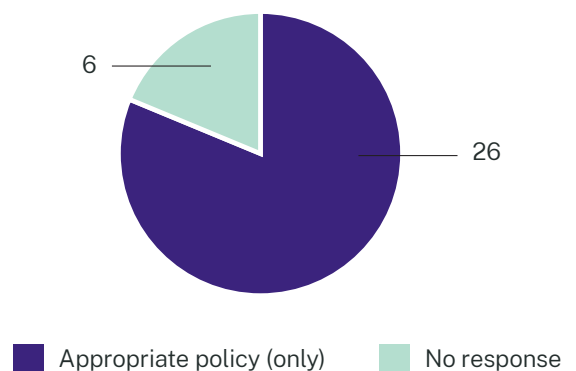
This makes clear that almost 60 percent of NSW Government agencies that have frontline workers are interested to work with the Commissioner and the Office to develop and implement mandatory training on modern slavery for frontline workers. This would potentially involve thousands of frontline workers, across multiple operational and regulatory settings.

Meeting this demand for training would, of course, depend on the availability of suitable resources. At present, the Office has no dedicated personnel charged with developing and rolling out such training and almost no budget with which to develop or roll-out such training.

NSW Government ICT use policies

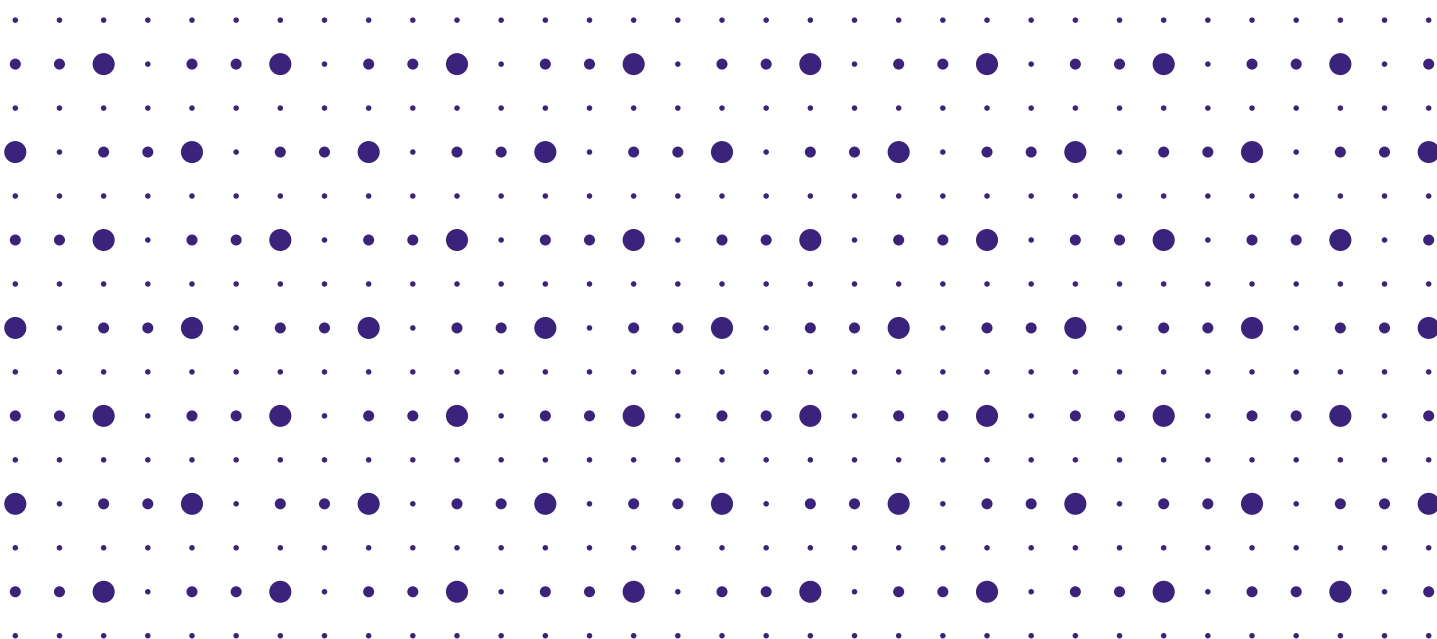
The Office surveyed the same 32 agencies about their ICT arrangements. 26 had an appropriate use policy in place relevant to section 19(3)(b). Six provided nil response. Additionally, though this was not specifically asked, four agencies mentioned that they have software filters in place that prevent the viewing of child abuse material.

Figure 5: Information provided by NSW Government agencies regarding ICT use policies



Enable remedy

Commissioner's statutory functions and responsibilities	Section under the Act
Advocate for and promote action to combat modern slavery	9(1)(a)
Identify and provide assistance and support for victims of modern slavery	9(1)(b)
Make recommendations and provide information, advice, education and training about action to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute offences involving modern slavery	9(1)(c)
Co-operate with or work jointly with persons and organisations to combat modern slavery and provide assistance and support to victims of modern slavery	9(1)(d)
Monitor the effectiveness of legislation and governmental policies and action in combating modern slavery	9(1)(f)
Promote public awareness of modern slavery and its effects on its victims	12(1)(a)
Provide advice, education and training on ways to prevent modern slavery taking place and assist the victims of modern slavery	12(1)(b)
Encourage reporting of instances of suspected modern slavery to appropriate authorities (including without limitation reporting by sex workers and bodies or organisations representing sex workers)	12(1)(c)
Establish and maintain a hotline (or utilise a hotline maintained by another person or body) for provision of advice and assistance to children and other persons who are, or may be, victims of modern slavery	12(1)(d)



Objective 2:

To improve access for people with lived experience to effective remedy –including essential services, justice, self-determination and empowerment.

Enabling remedy for victim-survivors of modern slavery requires enhancing their access to essential services, justice, self-determination, and empowerment.

The US State Department's 2024 *Trafficking in Persons Report* for Australia underscored the critical need to separate the provision of essential services from the criminal justice system and to strengthen these services to ensure they adequately meet survivors' needs. This reflects the experience of many individuals who have reached out for support to the OASC in FY2024, who report challenges receiving the assistance they need to fully regain their dignity and independence. With important initiatives underway at the Australian Government level to address these challenges –notably the commencement in July 2024 of a new Additional Referral Pathway by which survivors can be referred to the Support for Trafficked People Program –significant complementary efforts are needed at the NSW state level, including training, collaboration between organisations, and increased resources to better support the recovery process for survivors of modern slavery.

By the numbers

65

number of times people with lived experience engaged in OASC policy and programming processes

93%

of people with lived experience who, after participating in the inaugural Anti-slavery Forum, reported being 'extremely satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with levels of safety, respect and inclusion

313

referrals of survivors made

54

number of referrals for housing support

299

people trained by OASC on effective engagement with people with lived experience.

Commendations

Ken Dachi, Multicultural Affairs Advisor, Leeton Shire Council, and Welcoming Workplaces Coordinator, Welcoming Australia

Strategic Priority 2 – Achievement in Enabling Remedy

Commended for supporting the recovery of vulnerable and exploited migrant workers in the Riverina.

Poonam Datar, Independent Advisor on worker-led due diligence

Strategic Priority 2 – Achievement in Enabling Remedy

Commended for her development of the Cleaning Accountability Framework and support to cleaners victimised by modern slavery.

David Hillard, Pro Bono Partner, Clayton Utz

Strategic Priority 2 – Achievement in Enabling Remedy

Commended for securing remedy for survivors through the civil justice system.



Ken Dachi



Poonam Datar



David Hillard



Dr Tiffany McComsey



Uncle Michael 'Widdy' Welsh



Yvette Proud

Dr Tiffany McComsey, CEO, Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation, and **Uncle Michael 'Widdy' Welsh**, Chair, Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation

Strategic Priority 2 – Achievement in Enabling Remedy
Strategic Priority 5 – Building a Community of Purpose

Commended for their leadership of Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Home Corporation and for their work to organise and advocate for survivors of Australian slavery.

Yvette Proud, Lived Experience Engagement Program Coordinator, The Salvation Army

Strategic Priority 2 – Achievement in Enabling Remedy

Commended for enabling survivor recovery through the Lived Experience Engagement Programme and beyond.

Action: Foster survivor leadership

Empowering survivors and incorporating their expertise into policy and program development are crucial for enabling remedy in NSW. Involving people with lived experience of modern slavery in designing and developing the programs that impact them can boost confidence, improve financial stability, support professional growth, and reduce the risk of further exploitation. This approach also makes programs and policies more effective.

Under the leadership of the OASC's Lived Experience Practice Lead, throughout FY2024 the Office provide 65 opportunities for people with lived experience of modern slavery to engage in anti-slavery work safely and effectively in a variety of contexts. These opportunities ranged from sponsoring attendance of survivors at the inaugural NSW Anti-slavery Forum, to supporting people to share their lived experience and expertise with Australian and international policymakers, to integrating lived expertise into the development of OASC's own policies and projects.

Integrating lived expertise into OASC's practice

Critical to the OASC's efforts to integrate lived expertise into its work has been the inclusion of the role of Lived Experience Practice Lead (LEPL) into the team – the first full-time governmental position of its kind in the Australian modern slavery sector. Throughout the year the LEPL continued to strengthen the capacity of the Office to support the mobilisation of a survivor community and to integrate lived expertise in anti-slavery responses.

The LEPL's focus in FY2024 was on developing and formalising the OASC's best practice tools and processes for engaging with people with lived experience of modern slavery. This included drafting a set of privacy and consent forms, a lived experience engagement process, a remuneration policy, and a feedback mechanism.

To help inform the development of these tools and processes, in June 2024 the OASC held the first in a series of workshops with survivors with diverse experiences, including forced marriage, sexual servitude, child sexual exploitation, child labour, forced labour, and human trafficking. The workshops, which are facilitated by the LEPL and will continue in FY2025, provide an opportunity for people with lived experience to contribute in a meaningful way to the development of the tools and practices that impact them. Recognising the importance of building survivors' capacity to engage in anti-slavery work safely and effectively, the workshops allow survivors to gain experience and build leadership capabilities in lived experience work in a safe environment. The approach also means the OASC can assess and improve the implementation of its lived experience practice tools and processes on an ongoing basis. The tools and processes developed as part of this project will be made available in FY2025 to support other stakeholders to provide safe and consistent practices around lived experience engagement in the future.



From left: Dr James Cockayne, NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner, Scarlett Franks, survivor advocate, Fiona David, CEO, Fair Futures, Yvette Proud, Lived Experience Engagement Program Coordinator, The Salvation Army, and Sarah S, Lived Experience Practice Lead, Office of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner, participate in a panel discussion on enabling survivor leadership at the Anti-slavery Forum in May 2024 in Sydney.

From the desk of lived experience: Reflections for survivors, allies, and the anti-slavery movement

As part of efforts to foster survivor leadership in NSW, in June 2024 the OASC launched a new initiative – From the desk of lived experience: Reflections for survivors, allies, and the anti-slavery movement. Lived Experience Practice Lead, Sarah S began sharing insights from her unique position as both a survivor advocate and Australia’s first full-time integrated modern slavery lived experience expert.

Through written reflections and discussions with leading experts, Sarah invites survivors and allies to explore what it truly means to integrate lived experience and expertise into anti-slavery practice. In FY2025, Sarah will delve into critical topics such as the impact of complex trauma, navigating safety versus safeguarding, and fostering shame-sensitive, dignity-affirming practices. She will look at the latest evidence and share some practical tips.

“Lived experience engagement gives me the ability to participate in my own journey of recovery, and to do something about the very thing that has had such a profound impact on my life. I hope that my contributions can somehow help to prevent others from suffering in the same way or be a part of their healing journeys too”, said Sarah.

Scan the QR code to read
From the desk of lived experience



Supporting survivor advocacy

Throughout the year, the OASC helped facilitate opportunities for people with lived experience of modern slavery to share their expertise with NSW, Australian, and international policymakers. These opportunities included survivor participation in:

- The NSW Parliament’s Modern Slavery Committee’s Review of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW) in September 2023
- A consultation with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children in October 2023
- An informal consultation with the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner on sex worker perspectives on the Australian Government’s Rapid Review into the Exploitation of Australia’s Visa System
- The NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner’s submission to the Review of NSW legal protections for victim-survivors of forced marriage
- A consultation with the United States Ambassador to Counter Trafficking in Persons and State Department colleagues as they prepared the Australian section of the Trafficking in Persons report 2024
- Participation in a regional visits in Griffith/western Riverina, and Illawarra/Shoalhaven

People with lived experience of modern slavery also played a critical role in the success of the inaugural NSW Anti-slavery Forum held in Sydney on 21 and 22 May 2024. Fourteen survivors participated in the event as attendees, speakers, or panellists. Under the leadership of the LEPL, significant efforts were made to ensure the safe participation of people with lived experience in the Forum. Central to this was the development

and implementation of the Brave Space Guidelines, a framework developed by survivors to facilitate respectful, dignified, and safe conversations. Survivor voices featured in the program through a keynote address by Uncle Michael ‘Widdy’ Welsh, Chair of the Kinchela Boys Aboriginal Home Corporation (KBHAC), as well as panel participation from survivor advocates Sarah S, Scarlett Franks, and Moe Turaga.

For more information about the NSW Anti-slavery Forum, see [page 64](#).



Joseph La Posta, CEO, Multicultural NSW, and Uncle Michael ‘Widdy’ Welsh, Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation, at the Anti-slavery Forum in May 2024 in Sydney.

This article has been adapted from 'Remedy as Relational', published in the Journal of Modern Slavery, volume 8, issue 3.

Any attempt to assess our progress towards enabling remedy in NSW begs the question: 'What does remedy mean for survivors of modern slavery?'

I have grappled with this question both personally and professionally in my role as Lived Experience Practice Lead. As a survivor of modern slavery, I believe that it is important to address modern slavery in our supply chains. But I am also keenly aware that for some of us, exploitation is at the hands of a personal perpetrator, rather than a corporate entity.

It is difficult to quantify the destruction that is unleashed when someone takes ownership of another's life – destroying their functional autonomy, sense of worth, and the future they might have had without the trauma of modern slavery. I am not sure that there is any way to adequately compensate someone for those losses.

When I look back on my own experience of modern slavery, I see them in the context of other situations of abuse and recognise that their impact has been unique. I had struggled my whole life with the trauma of adverse childhood events, experiences of sexual abuse and domestic violence, and they all contributed to how I found myself trapped in a situation of modern slavery. However, the experience of being sold under duress, for the profit of another person was still far darker in some ways than previous abuse and swallowed every aspect of my life. I will never forget that moment of realisation: an incredulous, surreal kind of agony, knowing that my body in its most intimate form was no longer my own.

The fight for freedom unleashed a firestorm of assaults and threats and confirmed many of my fears about what our alleged perpetrator was capable of. Yet I was desperate to find a way out for us because I didn't want to leave any of the others in that situation behind. When we finally managed to escape it felt like a miracle, but that is not where the impact ended. It was merely the moment that the dust settled on the crater that my life had become.

At that point, remedy for me was about meeting basic needs to survive: a roof over my head, the ability to pay for medical costs, and a way to function at the most basic level – the ability to eat and sleep. It was less retrospective and more immediate.

As the shock wore off, the painful journey to process what had happened began. I struggled to understand how I had ended up in this situation. Shame consumed me and I no longer wanted to survive. I wanted to die. I felt I had nothing left to fight for. I was certain that I would never be able to adjust to life in the outside world and was convinced that I was doomed to a life without love, family, or a future.

Somehow, I found the strength to keep breathing and started to search for answers.

At this point, remedy would have been information and help to understand it. I had never heard the terms deceptive recruitment, debt bondage, sexual servitude, or modern slavery before – I only knew what they felt like.

Gradually, my ability to fight returned.

As I pieced together more information and realised what had happened, I started reaching out for help. For myself, and the other survivors. I tried everything I could think of, several times: support organisations, lawyers, police. It was confusing and heartbreaking. Even now, I still ask myself what I did wrong, what I could have said differently, to get help. Because help didn't come. The reality then was, as one of the other survivors said to me, that our trafficker now was no longer a person. Rather, it was desperation that took the choice and freedom away that we should have been reclaiming.

Watching my fellow survivors struggle was worse than the pain that I was drowning in and a new fear started to consume me. I knew the proclivities of my alleged perpetrator well, and this knowledge finally drove me past the terror that had previously prevented me from going to the police.

At that point, remedy would have been help from lawyers to understand the legislation or information about how to report. It could have been access to the Victims Services scheme. Remedy could have been police that recognised the crime and followed up the case.

When it looked like justice would never come for us, I started engaging in advocacy. Actively participating in my own recovery and in efforts to end modern slavery gave me new hope.

Remedy holds different meaning for every survivor. It can even mean different things at various stages of recovery, but in the end, remedy to me means healing.

I have learned that healing is not a linear process. It challenges me more than I would like it to most days. Modern slavery's greatest impact on my life, that no amount of money or justice process can ever remedy, is the daily struggle to overcome the trauma that impacts my ability to be functional and relational as a person.

This is key to answering the question – 'what does remedy mean for a survivor of modern slavery?' For us to heal, our interactions with others and the world around us need to counteract previous relationships with perpetrators that built trust only to break it, deceived in order to trap, promised help only to take freedom, and exploited us in unspeakable ways.

Remedy then, looks like learning to believe that humans can be kind, empathetic, responsive, and respectful. This requires actions both individually and systemically to restore trust, respond reliably, and hear the voices of those who have previously been silenced. As survivors we can then start to rekindle hope that there is life beyond exploitation and believe that dignity can be restored.

This kind of healing starts when the help provided allows people to reclaim functional autonomy and rebuild their lives relationally and within community. We can consider this in all of our systems' responses, be it service provision, criminal justice processes, victims' compensation schemes, or the inclusion of survivors in our anti-slavery initiatives. When we see remedy through the lens of relational healing, we create accountability for personal integrity and meaningful outcomes in system responses.

Sarah S
Lived Experience Practice Lead
Office of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner



Sarah S, Lived Experience Practice Lead, Office of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner

Action: Strengthen access to effective remedy

Innovating to improve access to safe and secure housing for modern slavery survivors

Access to affordable and appropriate crisis, short-stay, and longer-term accommodation is critical to safe exit and effective recovery from modern slavery. This is now well established through the United Nations and research reports, including by the Australian Red Cross.¹⁰ 54 referrals made by OASC for those seeking assistance and support in FY2024 involved urgent support to access housing.

OASC's assistance made an identifiable positive impact in several situations. However, where accommodation proved unavailable or unsustainable for the person (due to cost and visa considerations), survivors faced continuing risks of harm, including modern slavery. Housing is the foundation for effective recovery.

OASC's consultations suggest there are fewer than three dozen dedicated beds available at any given time in NSW for survivors of modern slavery, including forced marriage. And survivors often face barriers to accessing accommodation through other support channels, because their experiences are not recognised as, or do not constitute, domestic and family violence; or because of their visa status.

Anti-slavery and accommodation stakeholders have made clear a willingness to explore new options to address such a challenging issue. The Commissioner engaged in several advocacy actions during the reporting period, including meeting directly with the NSW Minister for Housing and the CEO of Homes NSW. He also provided a written submission in mid-2023 to the NSW Shared Equity housing initiative taskforce, looking at ways to strengthen access for survivors of domestic violence to this government programme that helps survivors get a foot on the home equity ladder. This work will be further developed in FY2025.



From left: Melina Matthia, Program Manager, Trafficking and Slavery Safe House, The Salvation Army; Eleni Argy, Modern Slavery Programs Coordinator, Taldumande Youth Services; Yamamah Agha, General Manager, Settlement Services International, discuss how to strengthen access to appropriate housing for modern slavery survivors at the Anti-slavery Forum in May 2024 in Sydney.

NSW Government actions on remedy

Section 19(3) of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW) requires the Commissioner to provide, in this Annual Report, a review of, amongst other things:

(c) action by the Department of Communities and Justice during the year to develop a system of support (including provision of accommodation) for victims of forced under-age marriage, irrespective of whether any offence against the victim has been prosecuted.

In its response to the Commissioner's enquiry on this matter, the Department of Communities and Justice did not identify any dedicated action during FY2024 to develop a "system of support" as anticipated by section 19(3) of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW). Instead, it pointed to various ways in which existing programming and policy work might support people who had experienced forced marriage. This included potential availability of supports through programming relating to Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence, child protection arrangements, victims support, multicultural engagement, and other schemes and services.

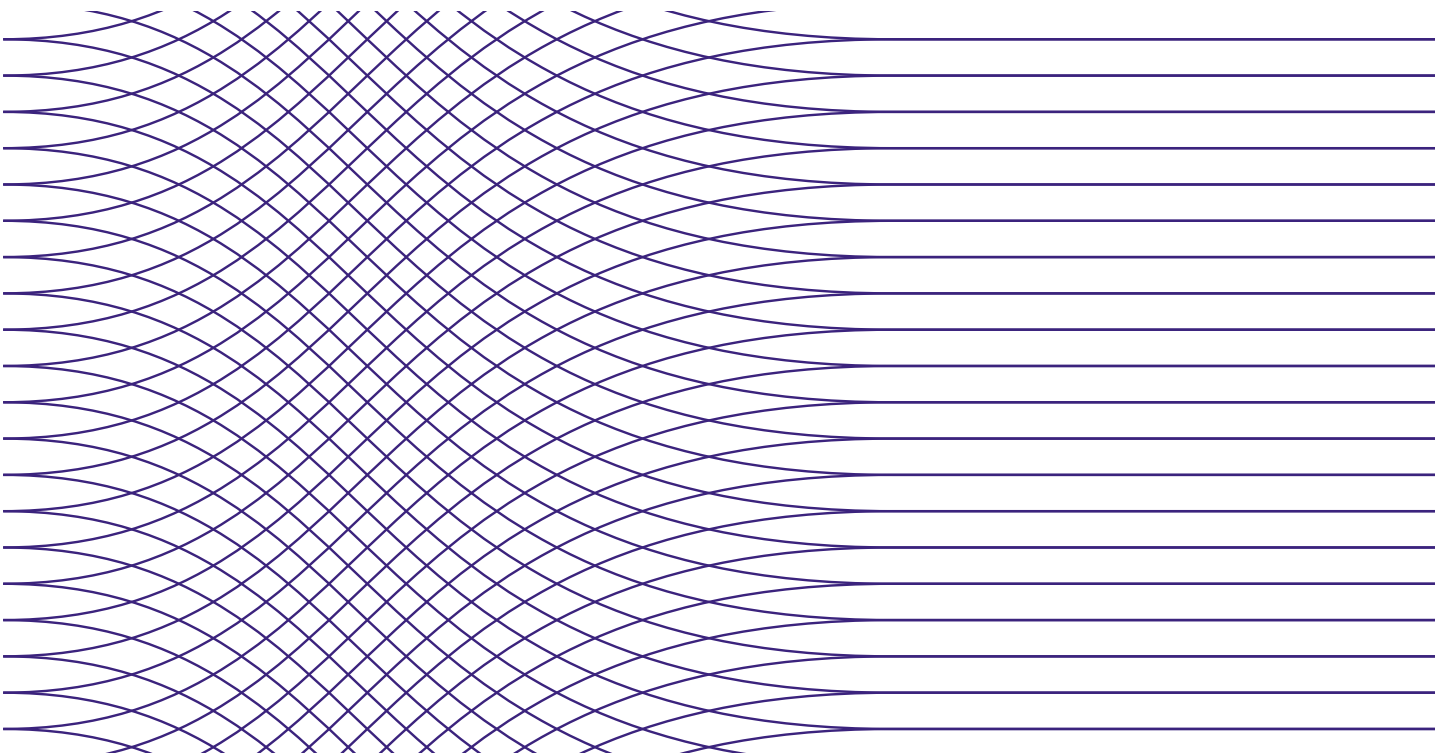
These supports appear to be provided piecemeal, rather than on a systematic basis. There is not at this point an identifiable dedicated "system of support" that has been developed specifically for victims of forced under-age marriage, and no system in place for identifying where beneficiaries of existing Department of Communities and Justice programming and services are, in fact, such victims – and then referring them to this system of support. There is, likewise, no dedicated arrangement in place for engagement with communities that may have heightened vulnerability to forced marriage – whether specific cultural communities or high-control religious groups – to inform them of the availability of such a system.

Nor has the Department of Communities and Justice yet mandated training on forced marriage for its thousands of frontline workers that may be coming into contact with these victims. Disturbingly, in September 2024 the media reported a case of a Homes NSW worker allegedly coercing a beneficiary into providing sexual services, under threat of penalty by removal of his and the Department's support.¹¹ If made out, these allegations might involve not only an egregious abuse of power, and sexual assault, but possibly also forced labour under Div 270 of the Commonwealth Criminal Code.

In the Introduction to this report, the Commissioner notifies the Department of Communities and Justice that the absence of such a system of support is a 'significant issue' in the operations of the Department. Consequently, under section 31(1)(a) of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018*, the NSW Department of Communities and Justice is obliged to provide a statement of the action taken, in relation to this issue during FY2025, in annual reporting for that financial year.

Foster responsible business practices

Commissioner’s statutory functions and responsibilities	Section under the Act
Advocate for and promote action to combat modern slavery	9(1)(a)
Monitor reporting concerning risks of modern slavery occurring in supply chains of government agencies	9(1)(e)
Monitor the effectiveness of legislation and governmental policies and action in combating modern slavery	9(1)(f)
Provide advice, education and training on ways to prevent modern slavery taking place and assist the victims of modern slavery	12(1)(b)
May develop, and make publicly available, codes of practice for the purpose of providing guidance in identifying modern slavery taking place within the supply chains of organisations and steps that can be taken to remediate or monitor identified risks.	27(1)
Promote public awareness of and provide advice on steps that can be taken by organisations to remediate or monitor risks of modern slavery taking place in their supply chains, including encouraging organisations to develop their capacity to avoid such risk	28(1)



Objective 3:

To show leadership in identifying and addressing modern slavery in supply chains and investment portfolios.

Government buyers and businesses in NSW are exposed to risks that they may cause, contribute to, or be linked to modern slavery through their operations or global supply chains.

Fostering responsible business practices requires that commercial actors understand these risks and take reasonable steps to manage and remediate them.

Commitments to responsible sourcing should go beyond mere words: they must be adequately resourced, consistently applied, and accompanied by concrete actions to prevent, mitigate, and remedy harm. Most importantly, they must be underpinned by engagement with workers – particularly those at risk of exploitation. Proposed amendments to the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (Cth) reflect public expectations – as well as international regulatory trends – that modern slavery due diligence will be effective and enforceable. The Commissioner’s Guidance on Reasonable Steps seeks to provide a workplan that NSW public actors and others can use to meet those expectations.

However, action by individual government entities or businesses alone can only go part of the way towards creating a responsible business environment in NSW. System change to tackle modern slavery risk demands collaboration within and between the public and private sector to improve supply chain visibility and maximise leverage. Further, it may require commercial actors to reconceptualise procurement functions as a means of delivering both value for money and social outcomes.

By the numbers

16

number of modern slavery due diligence training sessions conducted by OASC for public entities

10,300

number of visits to the Guidance on Reasonable Steps webpage

31

average number of minutes spent on the OASC Guidance on Reasonable Steps webpage by each visitor

101

requests for advice and support from reporting entities between January and June 2024

32

number of presentations made to private sector actors

Commendations

Brittany Knowles, Formerly Associate Director, Policy, NSW Treasury

Strategic Priority 3 – Achievement in Fostering Responsible Business Practices

Commended for her efforts to promote effective due diligence and reporting amongst NSW Government agencies.

Tania Lalor, Senior Consultant, Sustainable Procurement, Local Government Procurement

Strategic Priority 3 – Achievement in Fostering Responsible Business Practices

Strategic Priority 5 – Building a Community of Purpose

Commended for her work to promote effective due diligence and reporting amongst NSW local councils.



Brittany Knowles



Tania Lalor



Robin Mellon



Kate Turner

Robin Mellon, CEO, Better Sydney

Strategic Priority 3 – Foster Responsible Business Practices and Strategic
Strategic Priority 5 – Develop a Community of Purpose

Commended for his work to promote industry and cross-sectoral anti-slavery collaboration.

Kate Turner, Global Head of Responsible Investment, First Sentier

Strategic Priority 3 – Foster Responsible Business Practices

Commended for her contribution to anti-slavery efforts in the investment community.

Action: Remove products of modern slavery from public procurement

Since 1 July 2022, more than 420 public buyers in NSW – including all government agencies and local councils, ten universities, and eight state owned corporations – have been obliged to take reasonable steps not to buy products of modern slavery. Among these entities is the largest employer in the southern hemisphere and the second largest procurer in the southern hemisphere – the NSW Government. Together, these covered entities’ annual procurement is worth more than \$45 billion.

The Commissioner is given statutory powers to support and responsibilities to monitor these efforts, and to help ensure their effectiveness. During FY2024, the Commissioner continued his extensive program of work, including outreach, advice, and education and training, to support these NSW public entities in their efforts.

The Commissioner’s own procurement activity is conducted through the Department of Communities and Justice. Early in FY2024, the Commissioner provided feedback to assist the Department in updating its procurement policies to align with the Guidance on Reasonable Steps.

Shared Implementation Framework

During the second half of 2023, the Commissioner worked with more than 20 affected entities, and 70 individuals from across NSW Government, local councils and other public entities, to develop a Shared Implementation Framework to guide implementation of these obligations. Its development was endorsed by the NSW Procurement Leadership Group in October 2022.

The resulting Shared Implementation Framework was published in late 2023 and came into effect on 1 January 2024. The Framework recognises the challenges of addressing this problem in complex value-chains and the need for collaboration and peer learning among NSW government agencies and the business sector.

The centrepiece of the Framework is the Commissioner’s Guidance on Reasonable Steps to Manage Modern Slavery Risks in Operations and Supply-Chains (GRS). The GRS provides almost 200 pages of practical steps that public entities can take to prevent, identify, mitigate, address, and remediate modern slavery risks and harms in operations and supply-chains. The GRS gives public buyers in NSW greater certainty about what constitutes ‘reasonable steps’ to ensure products of modern slavery are not procured.

It has proven immediately popular and successful, with many private sector entities also turning to the GRS as a source of guidance for good practice in modern slavery risk management. Until 30 June 2024, the GRS website was visited more than 10,300 times, and the GRS was downloaded more than 150 times.

The Framework also included several other elements:

- The Inherent Risk Identification Tool to identify the level of modern slavery risk associated with certain products, at a global level. Numerous ASX-listed firms report using this tool in their own businesses.
- Model Tender Clauses and Model Contract Clauses designed to ensure that buyers can conduct sufficient due diligence on suppliers and manage modern slavery risk over the contract term.
- A GRS Public Register, identifying covered entities that fail to meet their modern slavery obligations, which will be published in FY2025.

Let’s be reasonable: What are reasonable steps to tackle modern slavery in supply chains?

Watch the Commissioner’s full remarks from day 2 of the NSW Anti-slavery Forum in May 2024 on OASC’s YouTube channel.



Poonam Datar, independent advisor on worker-led due diligence, speaks on engaging worker voices at the Anti-slavery Forum in May 2024 in Sydney.

Support to NSW public buyers

During FY2024, OASC also began publication of resources to support NSW public buyers to meet their new reporting and due diligence obligations. This included guidance on annual reporting obligations, quick reference guides, guidance on covered entities and capability levels, implementation timelines and expectations, and guidance on developing a modern slavery policy. Some of these have been adapted into an e-learning course available through Comperio, now completed by around 200 NSW Government officials. Further resources will be published in FY2025.

OASC also worked in FY2024 to integrate the Framework with existing tools and infrastructure in the NSW public procurement system. From 1 July 2024, it has been possible to identify from Buy. NSW's contract register where government buyers are buying high modern slavery risk products worth AU\$150,000 or more. This allows the Commissioner to understand where modern slavery risk is pooling across NSW and encourage those buyers to address modern slavery risks specifically in those value-chains.

Also from July 2024, the Commissioner has worked with NSW Government agencies to develop a GRS Shared Implementation Plan. The Plan will set clear, realistic, targets aligned with a maturity framework for achievement of each of the seven Reasonable Steps in the GRS. It will aim to identify collective approaches and capabilities and focus on whole-of-government and collaborative solutions wherever possible.

Stakeholder engagement

Between January 2024 and June 2024, the Commissioner introduced the GRS by delivering 16 presentations and webinars to NSW public entities, including the Office of Local Government, Local Government Procurement, universities, all NSW State-owned corporations, and the United Workers Union. For a full list of stakeholder engagement events, please see Appendix A.

The OASC also launched a mailbox specifically for enquiries related to the GRS, as well as a new 'Due Diligence News and Resources' email distribution list. These new communications channels allow the OASC's Business and Human Rights team to support covered entities working to implement the Guidance by providing advice and alerts to any new education and training resources. Since January 2024, the team has received and responded to more than 100 enquiries and the distribution list had more than 140 subscribers as of the end of FY2024.

Scan the QR code to sign up to receive Due Diligence News and Resources



From left: Vanessa Zimmermann Chair, Human Rights, UN Global Compact Network Australia and CEO, Pillar Two; Sonya Campbell, Deputy Secretary, Commercial, NSW Treasury; The Hon. Dr Sarah Kaine MLC, Member of the Legislative Council; Lucy Forbes, Acting Senior Legal and Policy Officer, Office of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner; and Dr James Cockayne, NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner. Dr Kaine speaks about the opportunities for the NSW Government to achieve social impact through its procurement policy at the Anti-slavery Forum in May 2024 in Sydney.

Action: Foster responsible business practices in the private sector

Business plays a significant role in addressing modern slavery risks in NSW. Business supplies the more than 400 NSW public buyers that have modern slavery due diligence obligations under the Act. Additionally, institutional investors and technology start-ups based in NSW are at the forefront of efforts to find market-based solutions to modern slavery risks.

In FY2024, the Commissioner continued to work to foster responsible commercial conduct in the private sector through 32 speaking engagements addressing key stakeholders, including the Australian Institute of Company Directors, the Australian Council of Superannuation Investors, the Infrastructure Sustainability Council, Australasian Procurement and Construction Council, the Australian Council of Superannuation Investors, and the Telco Together Foundation. In specific high-risk contexts, such as temporary migrant work, the Commissioner has also met directly with senior managers of individual businesses to provide advice and guidance on good practice in identifying and addressing modern slavery risks in operations and supply-chains.



From left: Belinda Callinan, Senior Group Manager Business Integrity and Compliance, Qantas, James Bartle, CEO & Founder, Maeka Group, and Abigail McGregor, Partner, Norton Rose Fulbright, discuss strategies to engage suppliers effectively at the Anti-slavery Forum in May 2024 in Sydney.



The inaugural Anti-slavery Forum brought together more than 280 experts for two days of discussion in May 2024 in Sydney.

Developing Codes of Practice

Section 27 of the Act permits the Commissioner to develop and publish Codes of Practice, which can guide both public and private actors to identify modern slavery taking place within their operations and supply-chains and take steps to remediate or monitor these identified risks. During FY2024, the Commissioner worked with industry stakeholders to develop two Codes of Practice.

Renewables

There is growing evidence of serious modern slavery risks in the production and distribution of renewable energy, including but not limited to the manufacture of lithium-ion batteries, photovoltaic solar panels, and wind turbines. Reliance on source materials and components produced or distributed through forced labour and other forms of modern slavery poses serious reputational, litigation and, increasingly, regulatory risks for actors in renewables value chains. These risks are not limited to manufacturers, distributors, developers, and installers, but also extend to buyers, investors, insurers, generators, retailers, large offtake entities, and others involved in the value-chain, such as financial and professional services firms. This creates uncertainty for the transition to renewable energy globally, including in NSW.

In FY2024, the Commissioner engaged in a partnership with the Clean Energy Council (CEC) to develop a Code of Practice on managing modern slavery risks in renewable energy value chains. The Commissioner published a discussion paper in August 2023 outlining the case for the Code of Practice and a proposed way forward, and invited input from stakeholders.

In January 2024, with guidance from the CEC, the Commissioner formed a working group to ensure extensive consultation and collaboration from all areas of the renewable energy value-chain in NSW. The working

group, which is continuing its work in FY2025, includes representatives from energy providers, OEMs (wind and solar), developers, and banking and investment. The draft Code of Practice and an accompanying Implementation Guide will be published in FY2025 and will offer a framework and practical guidance to the renewable energy industry on mitigating modern slavery risks across renewable energy value-chains.

Finance

The financial sector holds significant potential in combating modern slavery. Throughout FY2024, the OASC engaged with more than 25 stakeholders including banks, superannuation funds, managers, private equity funds, and industry associations to assess opportunities for collaboration in managing modern slavery risks. Through these consultations, it became evident that many financial sector entities are eager to transition from mere compliance to a proactive stance in addressing modern slavery risks.

In response to these insights, the Commissioner developed a discussion paper and a draft Code of Practice to Reduce Modern Slavery through Lending, Investment and Asset Management. The proposed Code seeks to promote integration of the perspectives of people with lived experience of modern slavery into policy development, enhancing the identification of modern slavery risks in lending, investment, and asset management, ensuring equitable access to financial services for survivors, and facilitating effective remedies for those affected by modern slavery.

Following the initial development of the draft Code of Practice, feedback was solicited from more than 20 leaders in lending, investment, and asset management during the NSW Anti-slavery Forum held in May 2024. Further consultations are scheduled for FY2025 to further progress negotiations on this proposed Code of Practice.

Modern slavery as a governance risk

In October 2023, the Commissioner delivered the Australian Council of Superannuation Investor's flagship 2023 Phil Spathis Governance Address, entitled 'Modern slavery as a governance risk'. Addressing more than 180 institutional investors in Melbourne, the Commissioner drew attention to a wide range of shareholder actions and regulatory developments that are moving the costs of modern slavery back onto balance sheets. The Commissioner argued that Australian boards may have a fiduciary duty to exercise reasonable care and diligence to address the foreseeable material risk of modern slavery in their business. And he suggested that there are important lessons from climate action on how these risks can be better governed at both the firm and market level.

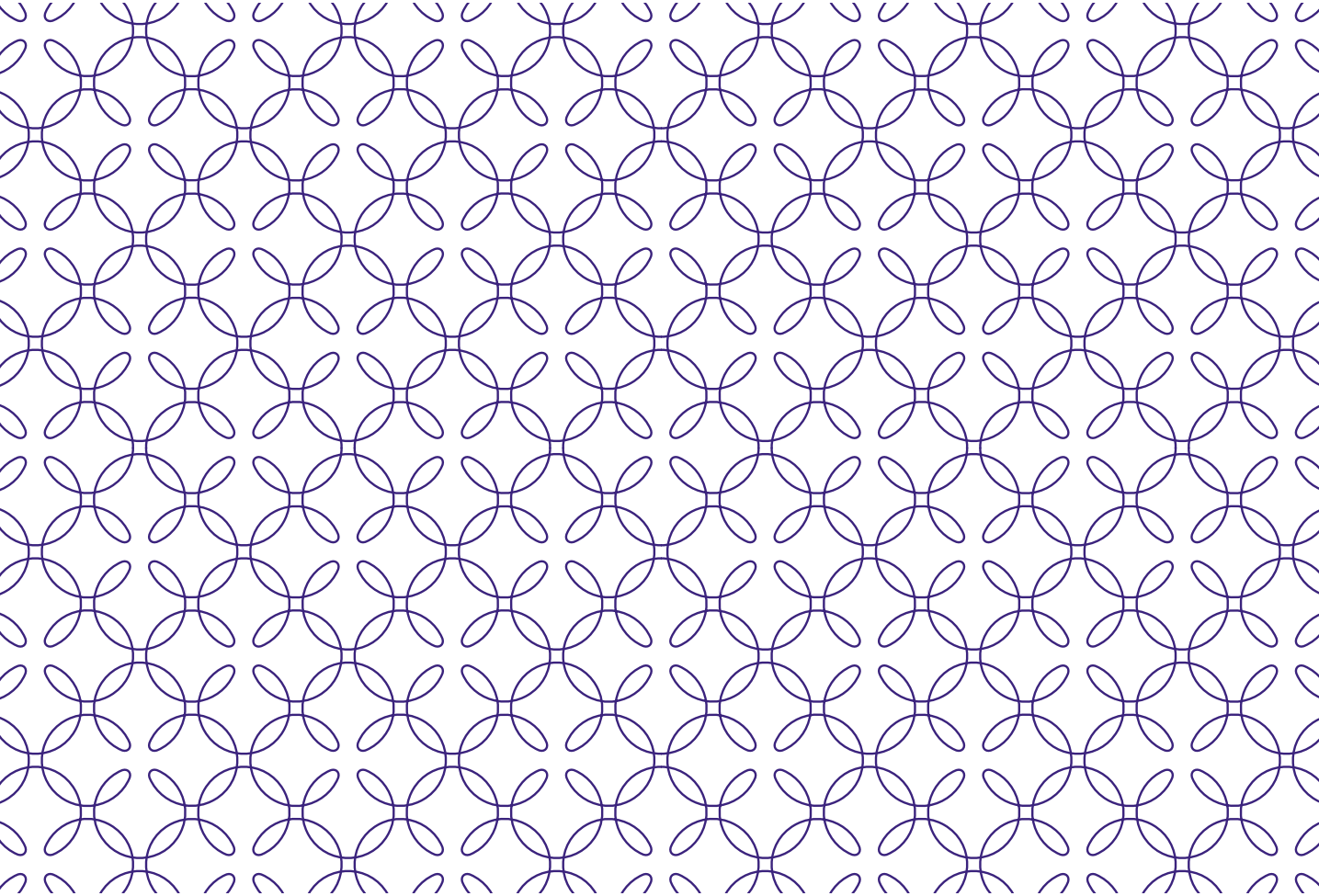
Scan the QR code to read the full remarks.



Dr James Cockayne, NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner, delivers the Australian Council of Superannuation Investor's 2023 Phil Spathis Governance Address in October 2023 in Melbourne.

Change the narrative

Commissioner’s statutory functions and responsibilities	Section under the Act
Advocate for and promote action to combat modern slavery	9(1)(a)
Co-operate with or work jointly with persons and organisations to combat modern slavery and provide assistance and support to victims of modern slavery	9(1)(d)
Raise community awareness of modern slavery	9(1)(g)
Promote public awareness of modern slavery and its effects on its victims	12(1)(a)
Provide advice, education and training on ways to prevent modern slavery taking place and assist the victims of modern slavery	12(1)(b)



Objective 4:

To make the case for anti-slavery in a convincing and empowering way.

Understanding modern slavery in NSW and Australia is pivotal for identification, prevention, and empowering survivors to reclaim their agency safely.

Central to achieving these objectives is the transformation of how modern slavery is perceived – a cornerstone of all communication efforts by the OASC. To accomplish this, throughout FY2024 the Office engaged with the community across NSW and nationwide through roundtable discussions, the inaugural NSW Anti-slavery Forum, public meetings, online forums, interviews with prominent national, state, and local media outlets, expansion of its social media presence, and a suite of publications. These initiatives collectively aim to shift the narrative and raise awareness of modern slavery throughout NSW.

By the numbers

62

speeches and presentations given by the Commissioner

5,000+

people in NSW directly engaged in the Commissioner's speeches and presentations

22

interviews of the Commissioner in the media

400+

publications mentioning the Commissioner

242

mentions on radio

143,910

organic impressions from the OASC LinkedIn page

35,849

visits to the OASC website

89%

of surveyed attendees at OASC events who indicated that they were 'extremely motivated' or 'very motivated' to pursue anti-slavery efforts after attending an OASC event

87%

of those surveyed who said that after engaging with OASC their knowledge on modern slavery and effective response increased

7

number of visits to rural and regional locations in NSW by OASC personnel

24

number of engagements with First Nations stakeholders

Commendations

Anna Bowden, CEO, International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children

Strategic Priority 4 – Achievement in Changing the Narrative

Commended for her leadership in efforts to tackle online sexual exploitation of children and for redefining expectations of survivor leadership.



Anna Bowden



Moe Turaga



Alison Rahill

Moe Turaga, Survivor Advocate, and **Alison Rahill**, Executive Officer, Australian Catholic Anti-slavery Network

Strategic Priority 3 – Achievement in Fostering Responsible Business Practices

Strategic Priority 4 – Achievement in Changing the Narrative

Commended for modelling how survivors and allies can work together to promote responsible business practice.

Action: Raise awareness across NSW in a way that empowers survivors

Commissioner's speaking engagements and events

During the reporting period, the Commissioner carried out 62 speaking engagements, including keynote addresses, presentations, panel discussions, and speeches. Through these events around 5,000 people from across government, industry, business, unions, and civil society were engaged in discussions and learning about modern slavery in NSW.

The Office also hosted several events throughout the year featuring global anti-slavery leaders who shared their expertise with the NSW anti-slavery community and learning from efforts here. This included hosting:

- In September 2023 – the United States Ambassador to Counter Trafficking in Persons Cindy Dyer and State Department colleagues, who engaged with survivors of modern slavery, including from NSW's First Nations communities, to learn about modern slavery in the Australian context for the annual Trafficking in Persons Report.
- In November 2023 – Dr Luis Fabiano de Assis, a Research Fellow at Stanford University's Human Trafficking Data Lab and the leader of the SmartLab initiative in Brazil. SmartLab is one of the most sophisticated ongoing uses, globally, of administrative data to analyse human trafficking patterns and feed that analysis into administrative and law enforcement decision-making.
- In January 2024 – Nick Grono, CEO of Freedom Fund, who shared his insights as a global thought leader on the changing face of the global anti-slavery movement and what it means for Australian business and society.
- In February 2024 – An event introducing the Commissioner's Guidance on Reasonable Steps to Manage Modern Slavery Risks in Operations and Supply Chains, with attendance from business, government, academia, and civil society (see [page 42](#) for further details).



Dr James Cockayne, NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner, and Nick Grono, CEO, Freedom Fund, discuss the changing face of the global anti-slavery movement and what it means for Australian business and society in January 2024 in Sydney.



Attendees at OASC's event 'A conversation with Nick Grono' in January 2024 at the offices of Baker McKenzie in Sydney.

Media engagement

In FY2024, the Commissioner participated in 22 media interviews with community, regional, Sydney metro, national, and specialist media to help raise awareness of modern slavery. In addition, the Office issued four media statements relating to modern slavery related news headlines. News of OASC's media statements and interviews reached over one million people across NSW and Australia, appearing in more than 400 print and online publications, and featuring 242 times on radio. Key highlights of the coverage included news stories in The Guardian, ABC RN, Oz Indian TV via Foxtel, the Law Society Journal, and The Daily Telegraph, as well as an opinion piece in The Guardian on cyber scams and human trafficking.

Digital engagement

Throughout FY2024, the OASC significantly grew its engagement through several digital channels. During the reporting period, the Office's webpages – hosted on the website of the Department of Communities and Justice – received almost 36,000 views, with the Due Diligence and Reporting page receiving around one third of those views. Particular focus was put on growing the OASC's professional audience on LinkedIn, which had more than 1500 followers at the end of the FY2024. OASC's posts had almost 144,000 organic impressions, 4,230 reactions, and more than 200 reposts. During FY2024, the Office distributed 9 e-newsletters and 11 EDMs about announcements and events to more than 1000 subscribers, with an average open rate of over 60 percent.

Scan the QR code to sign up to receive news from the Office of the Anti-slavery Commissioner



Raising awareness across regional and rural NSW

As part of efforts to raise awareness about modern slavery risks across regional and rural NSW, the Commissioner and members of the Office visited seven regional areas in FY2024. Visiting Goulburn, Griffith (twice), Leeton, Cessnock, Coffs Harbour, Wollongong, and Nowra, the team gained insights into regional risks related to modern slavery and explored ways to better support individuals experiencing such situations.

During these regional engagements, the Commissioner engaged with a diverse array of stakeholders, including local businesses, community leaders, Rotary clubs, councils, Members of Parliament, universities, international students, community media, service providers, individuals with lived experience, First Nations leaders, workers, and survivors of modern slavery. The discussions focused on raising awareness about modern slavery, understanding local challenges and vulnerabilities, and fostering collaboration to ensure meaningful support for those affected.

Visits to Goulburn in August 2023 and Cessnock in March 2024 focused on training procurement staff at local councils on their new statutory obligations under the Act and the introduction of the Commissioner's Guidance on Reasonable Steps to Manage Modern Slavery in Operations and Supply Chains.

In an October 2023 visit to Griffith and Leeton in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, the team engaged with local communities about the modern slavery risks in the local agricultural and horticultural industries. These risks were shown to be particularly evident among temporary migrant workers, including those working in NSW under the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme. During these visits, the Office conducted more than 15 meetings with stakeholders and held a community meeting in Griffith with Member for Murray Helen Dalton MP and Member for Wagga Wagga Dr Joe McGirr MP. The Office provided information to the community on identifying indicators of modern slavery and heard from the community about the needs they have in supporting people at risk of exploitation. The team also engaged with large local employers in the poultry farming and red meat industries to discuss steps to strengthen the management of modern slavery risks and hear their views on oversight of labour hire contractors, the vulnerability of temporary migrant workers, and effective remediation.

Anecdotal evidence gathered during these visits highlighted issues such as deceptive recruitment, labour exploitation, debt bondage, wage theft, and risks faced by women under the PALM scheme, including coercive control and sexual servitude. Additionally, challenges for individuals disengaging from the scheme, such as limited access to essential services including healthcare and housing, were also identified. In response to these findings, the Office hosted workshops in Griffith and Coffs Harbour (another location with high numbers of disengaged PALM workers) in April 2024 for local service providers.



The Commissioner and members of the OASC team meet with members of the NSW Police Force in October 2023 in Griffith.



The Illawarra Business Forum in April 2024 in Wollongong.



From left: Councillor Anna Napoli, City of Griffith; Dr Joe McGirr MP, Chair, Modern Slavery Committee; Helen Dalton MP, Member for Murray; Dr James Cockayne, NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner; Carmel La Rocca, President, Multicultural Council of Griffith; and Moe Turaga, Survivor Advocate, in October 2023 in Griffith.

First Nations engagement

Members of First Nations communities in NSW are survivors of practices that would today qualify as modern slavery. In FY2024 the Commissioner met with impacted First Nations communities to understand these practices, the impact of these practices on survivors, and the intergenerational trauma that these practices have caused, and to explore whether victim-survivors require assistance or support. These engagements have included regular consultation with First Nations leaders, notably local Aboriginal land councils, during rural and regional visits.

Uncle Michael ‘Widdy’ Welsh, chair of the Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation, along with KBHAC CEO Dr Tiffany McComsey delivered a keynote address at the inaugural Anti-slavery Forum to centre their story and their work in the anti-slavery movement. A further discussion at the Anti-slavery Forum titled ‘Reckoning with Australian Slavery’ examined the history of slavery-like practices endured by First Nations and Pasifika communities. The Office will continue to engage and seek to platform survivors of modern slavery and slavery like practices and explore ways to support their journey of healing and transformation.



From left: Christine Blakeney, Chair, Children of Bomaderry Home for Aboriginal Children; Dr James Cockayne, NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner; and Sarah S, Lived Experience Practice Lead, Office of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner, engage in a truth-telling session in April 2024 at the site of the Bomaderry Children's Home.



From left: Emelda Davis, Councillor (Waskam) Sydney City Council, Chair, Australian South Sea Islanders, Port Jackson; Uncle Michael ‘Widdy’ Welsh, Chair, Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation; Dr Tiffany McComsey, CEO, Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation; and Glenn Johnston, Director, Procurement & Business Support Infrastructure NSW, after speaking on reckoning with Australian slavery at the Anti-slavery Forum in May 2024 in Sydney.

Action: Build the business and policy cases for anti-slavery

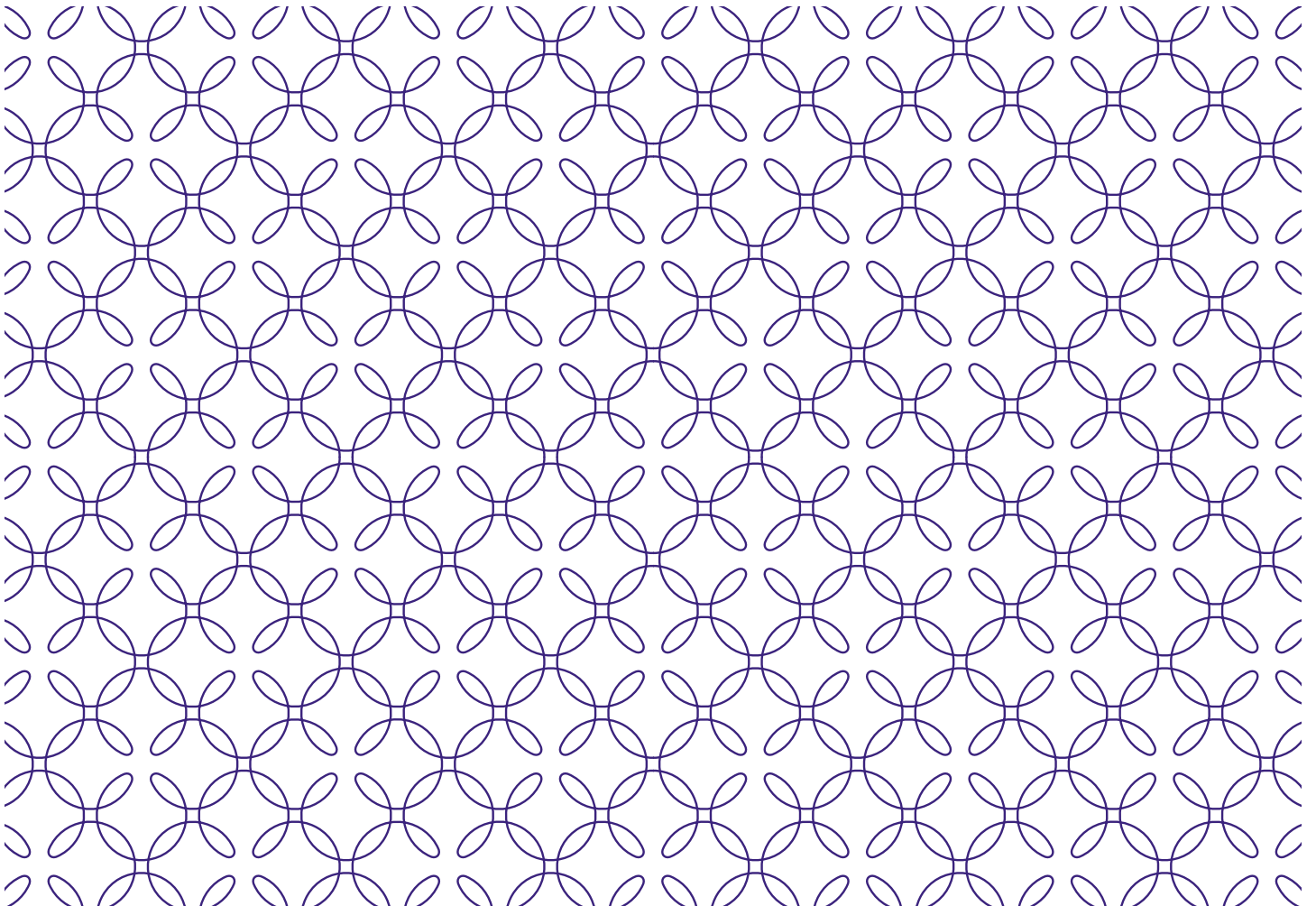
Building the foundations to understand modern slavery in NSW

There is a lack of clear and consistent data in Australia, including in NSW, on victim-survivors of modern slavery. Estimates for modern slavery prevalence and vulnerability in Australia range significantly and there are currently no robust estimates for NSW. This is partly due to the significant practical challenges involved in conducting modern slavery population analysis in NSW. Modern slavery is clandestine in nature and can be difficult to identify. In addition, victim-survivors may be reluctant to report incidences due to fear or shame or mistrust in authority. Collating data can also require aligning multiple definitions and classifications of modern slavery across the different organisations who collect and hold data.

Without stronger evidence of the numbers and characteristics of people at risk of, or victimised by, modern slavery in NSW, it will remain difficult to make a business case for government and third-party investment in anti-slavery activities. It will also be difficult to measure the impacts of different policies and programs.

In FY2024, OASC commissioned Nous Group to explore pathways to understanding the at-risk population in NSW, with a focus on data sharing and analytics. To gain a greater understanding of the data landscape in NSW and support future research, Nous and OASC consulted with 22 stakeholder groups within Australia and globally. This included consultation with not-for-profit service providers that provide frontline services and hold data on victim-survivors of modern slavery; academic groups that have estimated prevalence in other countries, including in the UK and US; research organisations; and NSW and Australian Government agencies.

Stakeholders will be consulted on the potential pathways to improve data sharing and analytics in FY2025, with the aim of developing a collaborative approach for the sector.



The Commissioner and the Office made the following submissions to parliamentary inquiries and governmental reviews in FY2024:

Title	Entity	Date
Review of the <i>Modern Slavery Act 2018</i> (NSW)	NSW Parliament Modern Slavery Committee	October 2023
Submission to the Review of NSW legal protections for victim-survivors of forced marriage	NSW Department of Communities and Justice	December 2023
Submission to the Inquiry into the procurement practices of government agencies in New South Wales and its impact on the social development of the people of New South Wales	NSW Parliament Standing Committee on Social Issues	January 2024
Submission to the inquiry into the Modern Slavery Amendment (Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner) Bill 2023 [Provisions]	Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee	January 2024
Submission to the Inquiry into the Ethical Clothing Extended Responsibilities Scheme 2005 (NSW)	NSW Parliament Modern Slavery Committee	February 2024



From left: Michael Tidball, Secretary, NSW Department of Communities and Justice; Dr Joe McGirr MP, Chair of the NSW Modern Slavery Committee; and Moe Turaga, Survivor Advocate, discuss the state of NSW anti-slavery at the Anti-slavery Forum in May 2024 in Sydney.

Focus: Addressing modern slavery risks for Temporary Migrant Workers

Temporary migrant workers in NSW come from diverse backgrounds, including the Pacific region under the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme, as well as working holiday makers, undocumented workers, skilled temporary workers and international students. In NSW, this workforce includes over 6,400 PALM workers (mostly in agriculture and meat processing) and perhaps up to 16,000 working holiday makers employed in food production. A significant number are women – around half of working holiday makers who work in food production, and around a fifth of all PALM workers. Many are young people with limited English skills.

While many migrant workers find their migration journey and stay to be a fruitful one, a significant minority are at the mercy of challenging and often exploitative conditions. As noted elsewhere in this report, over the last two years, personal engagement by the Office has included conversations with over 80 PALM workers, ongoing consultations with service providers, law enforcement officials, local council members, business, unions, diplomatic representatives, and Pacific Island community representatives. Additionally the Office organised two workshops in Griffith and Coffs Harbour in March 2024, at which 39 different local service providers and more than 20 subject matter experts were consulted. These consultations have highlighted issues such as debt bondage, deceptive recruitment practices, and in extreme cases, forced labour and human trafficking. Issues of wage theft, overpriced accommodation, poor occupational and health standards appear stubbornly common in the industry, despite improved enforcement and scrutiny. Female migrants, whether PALM workers or holiday makers, have been subject to sexual harassment and gender-based violence, or have faced pregnancies and/or childbirth without access to medical care.

These risks were connected to imposition of recruitment fees, over-charging for accommodation and transport (amounting to wage theft), intimidation and abuse, and substandard living arrangements. In some cases, there were signs of potential sexual servitude and exploitation, pregnancies without appropriate antenatal care, and inaccessibility of reproductive health care for female PALM workers.

For more information on these issues, please see [Be Our Guests](#), the Commissioner's recent (FY2025) report to NSW Parliament.

Support to vulnerable workers in regional NSW

Throughout the year, OASC's Assistance and Support Team worked to assist temporary migrant workers who faced multiple barriers accessing health, psychological, legal and immigration services, housing, or safe grievance mechanisms to address mistreatment after they had disengaged from the PALM scheme. These barriers were worsened by limited availability of interpreters, knowledge about and the unavailability of culturally appropriate support services, and pressure on housing stock.

During visits to regional NSW, the Office moreover observed that local communities, organisations and institutions, and Pacific diaspora groups have stepped in to assist disengaged PALM and other temporary migrant workers. The team learned of important spontaneous efforts by local organisations to provide housing, income, health, psychological and other supports, and to support productive engagement between local communities and temporary migrant workers at risk of modern slavery.



Ken Dachi, Multicultural Affairs Advisor, Leeton Shire Council, and Welcoming Workplaces Coordinator, Welcoming Australia, speaks about the concerning situation for some temporary migrant workers in regional and rural NSW at the Anti-slavery Forum in May 2024 in Sydney.

Protecting our harvest from harm

Following a visit to the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area, in October 2023 the Commissioner addressed the Fair Farms Fair and Ethical Sourcing Conference in Melbourne. He reflected on what he had learned over the previous year from speaking to workers, growers, business leaders, government, and communities during his travels throughout regional NSW. While temporary migrant work schemes can offer powerful partnerships for prosperity, if not well regulated they can also sow the seeds of a harvest of harm.

The speech was covered in the Weekly Times as well as on the ABC and in regional media.

[Click here](#) or scan the QR code to read the full remarks



Migrant workers in Australia: The challenges of detecting modern slavery risks

At the NSW Anti-slavery Forum in May 2024, Migrant Justice Institute's co-CEO Associate Professor Laurie Berg provided insights into the structural vulnerabilities of temporary visa holders in Australia and offered recommendations to improve protection, support, and remediation for labour exploitation.

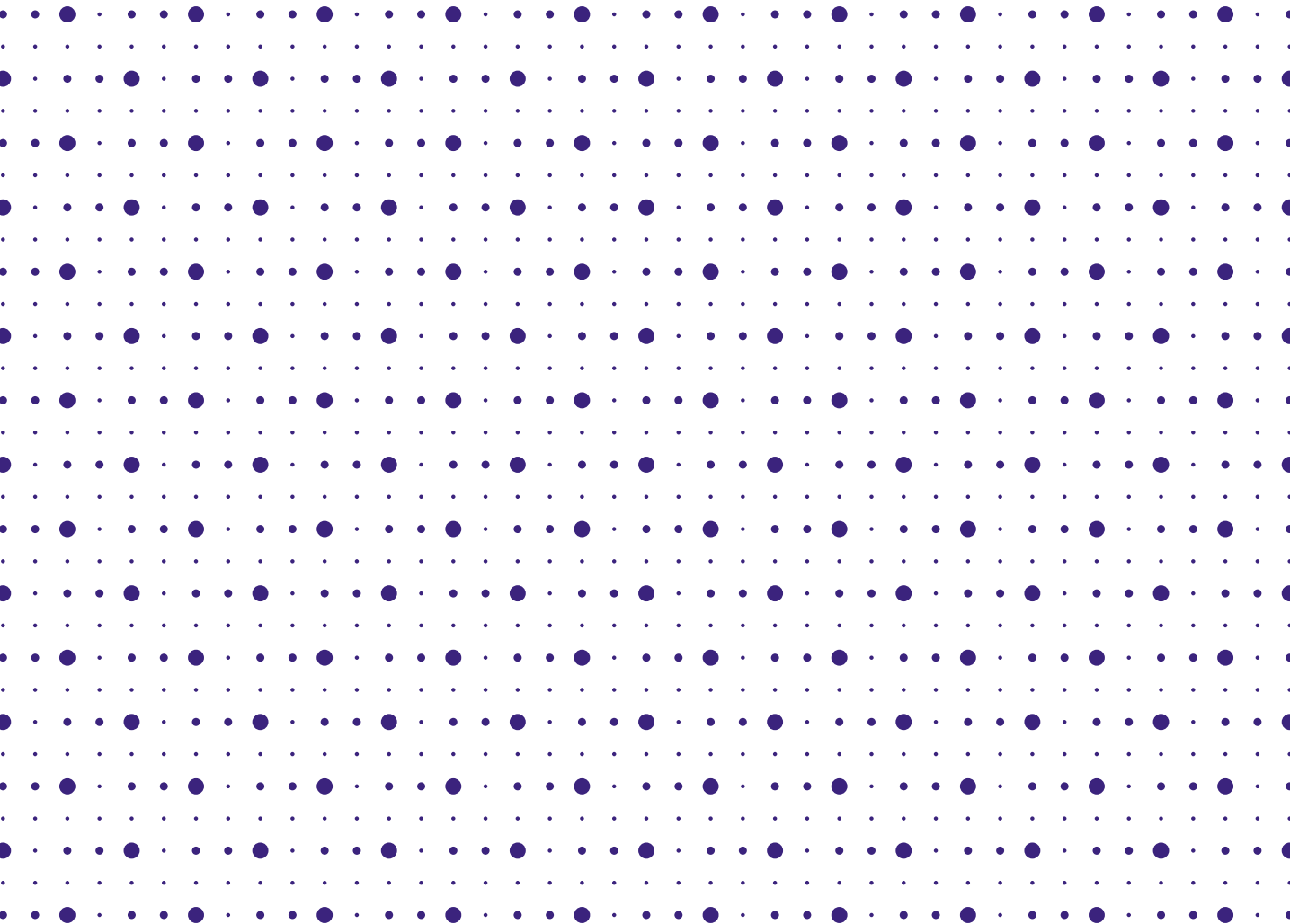
[Click here](#) or scan the QR code to watch the keynote address



Dr James Cockayne, NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner, delivers a keynote address 'Protecting our harvest from harm' at Fair Farms' Fair and Ethical Sourcing Conference in October 2023 in Melbourne.

Develop a community of purpose

Commissioner’s statutory functions and responsibilities	Section under the Act
Advocate for and promote action to combat modern slavery	9(1)(a)
Provide advice, education and training on ways to prevent modern slavery taking place and assist the victims of modern slavery	9(1)(b)
Make recommendations and provide information, advice, education and training about action to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute offences involving modern slavery	9(1)(c)
Co-operate with or work jointly with persons and organisations to combat modern slavery and provide assistance and support to victims of modern slavery	9(1)(d)
Raise community awareness of modern slavery	9(1)(g)
Promote public awareness of modern slavery and its effects on its victims	12(1)(a)





Objective 5:

To lay the foundations for sustainable and inclusive implementation of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW).

Businesses, government entities, policymakers, academia, service providers, unions, civil society organisations, and people with lived experience all play important roles in addressing modern slavery in NSW.

A key component of the current Strategic Plan is to build understanding and collaboration between these varied groups to innovate and implement effective strategies to identify, prevent, and address the complex spectrum of modern slavery issues within NSW.

In FY2024, the OASC worked toward this goal of developing a Community of Purpose by organising events such as the inaugural NSW Anti-slavery Forum and bringing together diverse experts in the Commissioner's Advisory Panel. The Office also organised a successful community social event.

By the numbers

281

number of attendees at the inaugural Anti-slavery Forum

5%

of attendees at the Anti-slavery Forum were people with identified lived experience of modern slavery

87%

of those attending the Anti-slavery Forum that were either 'extremely satisfied' or 'very satisfied'

82%

of respondents who found that the Anti-slavery Forum helped them make connections to other anti-slavery sector actors that they had not previously worked with

618

number of hours contributed by Advisory Panel members to OASC work

74%

of Advisory Panel members were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with their experience as members

Almost

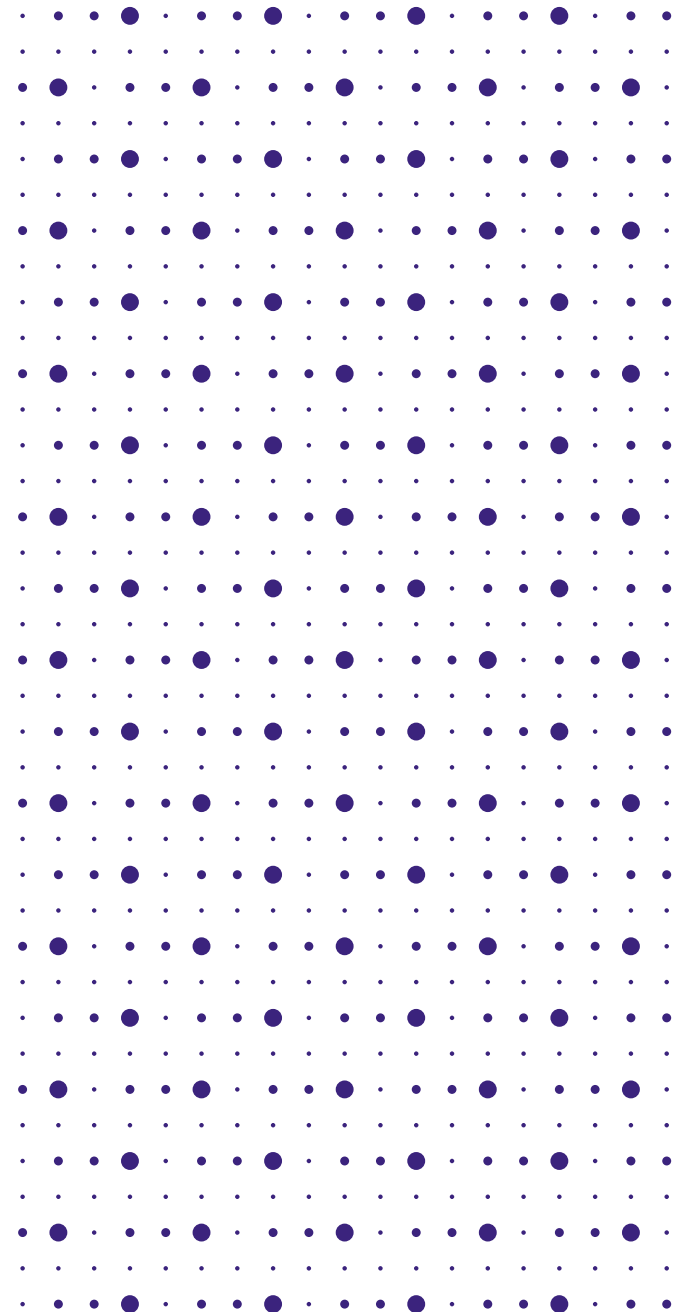
6,000

number of people subscribed to OASC channels

Commendations

Commendations in relation to Strategic Priority 5 were awarded to recipients of commendations under these other Strategic Priorities:

1. A/Prof Bassina Farbenblum and A/Prof Laurie Berg
2. Dr Tiffany McComsey and Uncle Michael 'Widdy' Welsh
3. Tania Lalor and Robin Mellon



Attendees at OASC's anti-slavery social event held to mark International Day for the Abolition of Slavery in December 2023 in Sydney.

Action: Organise an inclusive community of purpose

NSW Anti-slavery Forum

In a first for NSW, more than 250 leaders from local and state government, community service providers, academia, unions, and business joined modern slavery survivors at the inaugural NSW Anti-slavery Forum on 21 and 22 May 2024. The event was central to OASC's efforts to convene diverse stakeholders impacted by modern slavery, foster a community of purpose, and promote collaboration.

Day one, themed 'Fostering a Community of Purpose', featured remarks from the NSW Attorney General the Hon. Michael Daley MP, emphasising the foundational steps made in NSW to combat modern slavery. The day's keynote address, delivered jointly by Kinchela Boys Home Aboriginal Corporation Chair Uncle Michael 'Widdy' Welsh and CEO Dr Tiffany McComsey, introduced discussions on the historical legacy of slavery-like practices endured by First Nations peoples in NSW, titled 'The path to remedy: unlocking our past to free our future.'

Highlights included expert panel discussions on the roles of allies and institutions in supporting modern slavery survivors, improving their access to safe housing, bolstering frontline workers' ability to identify and assist potential victims, and addressing risks faced by temporary migrant workers.

Day two, themed 'Fostering Responsible Commercial Conduct', featured a keynote address by Migrant Justice Institute Co-CEO and University of Technology Sydney Law Faculty Associate Professor Laurie Berg entitled 'Migrant Workers in Australia: The Challenges of Detecting Modern Slavery Risks'.

The day also included expert discussions on new modern slavery due diligence and reporting obligations for over 420 NSW public entities, strategies to leverage procurement policies for social impact, and ensuring effective identification, management, and remedy of modern slavery risks within supply chains, including the renewable energy, ICT, and cleaning sectors.

Special efforts were made to ensure the safe participation of people with lived experience of modern slavery. This included engagement with people with lived experience, the development of the Brave Space Guidelines (a framework for respectful, dignified and safe engagement of people with lived experience inspired by Survivor Connections), the provision of counselling services, specific spaces for people with lived experience and centering voices of survivors in the discussions.



Abigail McGregor, Partner, Norton Rose Fulbright, poses a question during the Anti-slavery Forum, which was generously hosted by Norton Rose Fulbright in May 2024 at their offices in Sydney.

NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner's Advisory Panel

The inaugural NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner's Advisory Panel was established in July 2023 and provided advice and counsel to the Commissioner throughout the year on the sustainable and inclusive implementation of his Strategic Plan 2023–2026. A list of members is included in Appendix B.

Aligning with the Office's commitment to centre survivors at the heart of policy and program design and delivery efforts, one in five members of the FY2024 Advisory Panel brought expertise from lived experience of modern slavery.

Advisory Panel members were selected through an open and competitive application process and brought expertise in modern slavery or related fields including government, human rights, legal, academic, business, advocacy, service provision, and procurement.

All members of the Advisory Panel are entitled to be paid for their time and expertise and have access to counselling and other supports. The Advisory Panel members serve in a personal capacity and commit to the confidentiality of the Panel's deliberations and engagement with the Commissioner and his team.

Action: Ensure the sustainability of efforts under the Act

A particular focus in FY2024 has been on strengthening operational and policy engagement between OASC and NSW and Federal Government agencies. Regular meetings to progress collaboration and mutual engagement on modern slavery issues were held with a wide variety of Federal agencies, including:

- Australian Attorney-General's Department
- Australian Border Force
- Australian Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission
- Australian Federal Police
- Australian Human Rights Commission
- Australian Institute of Criminology
- Commonwealth Director of Public Prosecutions
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
- Department of Home Affairs
- Department of Social Service
- Fair Work Ombudsman

The Office also worked to build and strengthen relationships with key NSW leaders and advocates including the Commissioner for Victims' Rights, the Advocate for Children and Young People, the NSW Aging and Disability Commission, Anti-Discrimination NSW, and the Women's Safety Commissioner.

The NSW public sector was also regularly engaged with the work of the Commissioner through meetings, events and at the Anti-slavery Forum. This included the Department of Communities and Justice, Department of Climate Change Energy and the Environment, the Department of Education, Homes NSW, Multicultural NSW, NSW Health, NSW Industrial Relations, NSW Procurement, the Premier's Department, the Cabinet Office, Regions NSW, Safework NSW, Transport for NSW, and the NSW Treasury.

The Commissioner met routinely with Department of Communities and Justice senior personnel (Secretary and Deputy Secretary) to provide mutual briefings and coordinate on strategic and operational matters. He also met with the Commonwealth Attorney-General, The Hon. Mark Dreyfus KC MP, and the federal Assistant Minister for Social Services and Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, the Hon. Justine Elliot MP. The Commissioner was also an invited participant in the Ministerial meeting of the National Roundtable on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking in December 2023.

The Office maintains a close and active dialogue with a diverse array of anti-slavery stakeholders, including direct engagement and personal provision of support and assistance to survivors.

Appendix A: Stakeholder engagement with NSW public entities and private actors FY2024

NSW Public Entities

Title	Stakeholder	Date
Introduction to the Commissioner's Guidance	NSW Procurement Board	August 2023
Stronger Communities Cluster Procurement Forum	Procurement staff from the across the Stronger Communities cluster	October 2023
NSW Gov Community of Practice for Procurement Professionals meeting	NSW Gov community of practice for procurement professionals	November 2023
NSW Treasury's Trust & Accurate Data (TAD) Forum	Data analysts and procurement professionals from around NSW Government	November 2023
HealthShare NSW Modern Slavery Working Group meeting	Members of the HealthShare NSW Modern Slavery Working Group	December 2023
Consultation with NSW Procurement Board members on Implementation of Shared Implementation Framework	Regional NSW	February 2024
Consultation with NSW Procurement Board members on Implementation of Shared Implementation Framework	Transport for NSW	February 2024
Consultation with NSW Procurement Board members on Implementation of Shared Implementation Framework	NSW Premier's Department	February 2024
Consultation with NSW Procurement Board members on Implementation of Shared Implementation Framework	NSW Department of Communities and Justice	February 2024
Consultation with NSW Procurement Board members on Implementation of Shared Implementation Framework	NSW Department of Customer Service	March 2024
Consultation with NSW Procurement Board members on Implementation of Shared Implementation Framework	NSW Ministry of Health	March 2024

Title	Stakeholder	Date
Consultation with NSW Procurement Board members on Implementation of Shared Implementation Framework	NSW Department of Education	March 2024
Consultation with NSW Procurement Board members on Implementation of Shared Implementation Framework	NSW Department of Enterprise, Industry and Trade	March 2024
Consultation with NSW Procurement Board members on Implementation of Shared Implementation Framework	NSW Department of Planning, Housing, and Infrastructure	March 2024
Introduction to the Commissioner's Guidance	Macquarie University	March 2024
Introduction to the Commissioner's Guidance	Office of the Local Government	March 2024
Introduction to the Commissioner's Guidance	Local Government Procurement, Cessnock	March 2024
Introduction to the Commissioner's Guidance	United Workers Union	April 2024
Introduction to the Commissioner's Guidance	NSW Government Procurement Board	April 2024
Introduction to the Commissioner's Guidance and related resources	Sydney Water	May 2024
Introduction to the Commissioner's Guidance	NSW State-Owned Corporations	May 2024

Private Entities

Title	Stakeholder	Date
Human Rights Resources Energy Collaborative (HRREC)	Members of the HRREC	August 2023
Energy Procurement Supply Association (EPSA) Working Group meeting	Members of EPSA	September 2023
Phil Spathis Governance address	Australian Council of Superannuation Investors	October 2023
Property Council Human Rights and Modern Slavery Working Group	Property and construction participants	October 2023
Infrastructure industry roundtable	Australian infrastructure sector stakeholders	October 2023
Ethical Sourcing Conference	Fair Farms	October 2023
The Australian Universities Procurement Network's Modern Slavery Program Forum	The Australian Universities Procurement Network	October 2023
An evening event with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium Hadja Lahbib on business and human rights	Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belgium	October 2023
Informed 365 Property Platform users meeting	Property and construction participants	October 2023
Launch of Australian Ethical Consumer Report	Business and government stakeholders	November 2023
Electronics Watch Virtual Summit 2023	Public sector organisations	November 2023
National Retail Association meeting	Retail members of the National Retail Association	November 2023
Metcash Modern Slavery Working Group meeting	Metcash Modern Slavery Working Group	December 2023
In Conversation with Nick Grono	Baker McKenzie	January 2024
University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) meeting	UTS' senior leadership team	January 2024
Charles Sturt University (CSU) meeting	CSU's senior leadership team	January 2024
University of New South Wales (UNSW) meeting	UNSW's senior leadership team	February 2024

Title	Stakeholder	Date
Launch of the Commissioner's Guidance	Business, government, academia and NGOs	February 2024
Australian Institute of Company Directors' (AICD) Sydney Round Table on Modern Slavery	Members of the AICD	February 2024
Introduction to the Commissioner's Guidance	Norton Rose Fulbright, business and government stakeholders	February 2024
Introduction to the Commissioner's Guidance	Infrastructure Sustainability Council	February 2024
ACRATH Members' Annual Gathering – 'Modern Slavery is closer than you think'	Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH)	March 2024
Macquarie University (MQU) meeting	MQU's senior leadership team	March 2024
Members Forum	Members of Master Builders Queensland	April 2024
Introduction to the Commissioner's Guidance	Members of the Australasian Procurement and Construction (APCC)	April 2024
Illawarra Business Forum	Wollongong Business stakeholders	April 2024
University of Wollongong (UOW) meeting	UOW's senior leadership team	April 2024
2024 Responsible Investment Conference	Asset owners, asset managers, companies, researchers, consultants and other interested stakeholders	May 2024
Introduction to the Commissioner's Guidance	NAB	May 2024
Roundtable on 'Understanding Modern Slavery in Supply Chains'	Informed 365 members from multiple industries	May 2024
Modern Slavery Insights Series	Members of Telco Together Foundation	May 2024
World Sustainable Contracting Day event	Procurement professionals from around the world through the WorldCC Foundation	May 2024

Appendix B: NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner's Advisory Panel

The Commissioner's Advisory Panel members are:

Eleni Argy (2023–present)

Richard Boele (2023–present)

Yoness Blackmore (2024–present)

Anna Boucher (2023–2024)

Måns Carlsson OAM (2024–present)

Ro Coroneos (2024–present)

Thomas Costa (2023–present)

Alexander Coward (2023–present)

Poonam Datar (2023–present)

Fiona David (2023–present)

Alan Dayeh (2024–present)

Rachel Elliott (2023–2024)

Craig Foster AM (2023–2024)

Scarlett Franks (2023–present)

Lina Garcia (2023–present)

Luke Geary (2023–present)

Biba Honnet (2024–present)

Lisa Ira (2024–present)

Glenn Johnston (2023–present)

Rizwana Khan (2023–present)

Joseph La Posta (2023–present)

Blake Looney (2024–present)

Esty Marcu (2023–2024)

Dr Darian McBain (2024–present)

Kim Miller (2024–present)

Heather Moore (2023–2024)

Nanushka (2023–2024)

Kara Nicholls (2024–present)

Kerry O'Brien (2023–2024)

Robyn Ormerod (2024–present)

Cindy Penrose (2023–present)

Kyla Raby (2023–2024)

Dr Sophie Reid (2023–present)

Fiona Reynolds (2023–present)

Violet Roumeliotis AM (2023–present)

Sarah S (2023–2024)

Jacob Sarkodee (2023–present)

Dr Frances Simmons (2023–present)

Jenny Stanger (2023–present)

Siobhan Toohill (2024–present)

Moe Turaga (2023–present)

Mabel Wong (2024–present)

Notes

1. R v Tang (2008) 237 CLR 1.
2. Global Estimates of Modern Slavery: Forced Labour and Forced Marriage, International Labour Organization, Walk Free and International Organization for Migration, 2022.
3. Estimating the dark figure of human trafficking and slavery victimisation in Australia, Lyneham S, Dowling C and Bricknell S, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2019.
4. Global Slavery Index: Australia, Walk Free, 2023.
5. S Lyneham, Attrition of human trafficking and slavery cases through the Australian criminal justice system (Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, 2021).
6. Figures calculated based on NSW case data and methodologies used in The economic and social costs of modern slavery: Research Report 100, Reed S, Roe S, Grimshaw J, Oliver R, UK Home Office, 2018 and Estimating the dark figure of human trafficking and slavery victimisation in Australia, Lyneham S, Dowling C and Bricknell S, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2019.
7. See Developing Freedom: The Sustainable Development Case for Ending Modern Slavery, Forced Labour and Human Trafficking, Cockayne J, United Nations University, 2021.
8. Figures calculated based on NSW case data and methodologies used in Estimating the dark figure of human trafficking and slavery victimisation in Australia, Lyneham S, Dowling C and Bricknell S, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2019.
9. Health Care and Human Trafficking: We are Seeing the Unseen, Chisolm-Straker M, et. al, 2016.
10. Barriers in accommodating survivors of modern slavery: Working towards safe, suitable, and sustainable housing, Australian Red Cross, 2021.
11. NSW public housing official allegedly told woman she would get a home faster if she had sex with him, The Guardian, 2024.

**Office of the
NSW Anti-slavery
Commissioner**

E: antislavery@justice.nsw.gov.au

W: dcjnsw.info/antislaverycommissioner



Call 1800 FREEDOM (1800 37 33 36)
for confidential support and advice
for victims of modern slavery