



Immigration Advice
and Rights Centre

**HELPING
PEOPLE
NAVIGATE**
| AUSTRALIAN
IMMIGRATION LAW

MEDIA RELEASE

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Migration reforms make it harder for employers to 'weaponise' visas

The Federal Government's migration strategy will help improve a broken, neglected system that allowed migrants to be exploited in Australia.

"For too long migrants have been afraid to speak up about unfair pay, exploitation and unsafe conditions at work," Principal Solicitor Joshua Strutt said.

"They have faced systemic exploitation in Australia due to the lack of adequate whistle-blower protections and a fundamental power imbalance between workers and their employers.

"We have clients who were essentially held captive and threatened by their Australian employer. Told they'd have their visas cancelled, be removed from Australia and that their families would be killed if they didn't follow their rules.

"It's why the Immigration Advice and Rights Centre, alongside other advocates, have been lobbying for changes to the migration system for a long time. Finally, today, the government has announced changes that will allow migrant workers to enforce their workplace rights," he said.

Mr Strutt says the new Skills in Demand visa which would allow migrant workers to move between workplaces, rather than stay with one employer for years, will have a major impact.

"The ability to leave a workplace that's doing the wrong thing is crucial to protecting migrant workers against exploitation," he said.

"If migrants have the choice to leave, without impacting their visa status and pathway to permanent residency, it will make it harder for employers to weaponise their visa status and use it to exploit them.

"It gives people the power to leave unsafe situations and speak up about how they are being treated rather than continue being underpaid or suffering through horrible conditions so they can stay in Australia," Mr Strutt said.

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For more information or interviews with Joshua Strutt please contact Communications Manager Sarah Sinclair on 0419 170 535 or sarah.sinclair@iarc.org.au.

About IARC

The Immigration Advice and Rights Centre (IARC) is a community legal centre (CLC). We are a non-profit that helps vulnerable people navigate Australian immigration law by providing free legal advice, information and casework services. Our clients are migrants, refugees and people seeking asylum. We provide expert legal services to our clients through three practice areas: Immigration and Domestic Violence, Visas and Citizenship and Visa Assist for Migrant Workers. Our team works with people who are experiencing multiple layers of hardship. Many of the clients we assist have experienced trauma and are financially disadvantaged. They also come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

IARC has more than 35 years experience in migration law and policy. Our vision is for Australia's immigration system to be fair, just and accessible for everyone.