



**HELPING  
PEOPLE  
NAVIGATE**  
| AUSTRALIAN  
IMMIGRATION LAW



# **PREVENTING MIGRANT WORKER EXPLOITATION IN AUSTRALIA**

**A Report for the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms  
of Slavery**

Immigration Advice and Rights Centre

November 2024

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## The Problem

Migrant workers in Australia are 40% more likely to face workplace exploitation than Australian workers.<sup>1</sup> Australia's immigration system enables this higher incidence of exploitation by creating a power imbalance between employers and people with precarious visa statuses.<sup>2</sup>

The Immigration Advice and Rights Centre (**IARC**) provides free immigration advice and assistance to migrant workers who have experienced workplace exploitation. We have advised clients in the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (**PALM**) scheme and migrants holding temporary work visas who have suffered slavery-like conditions at the hands of exploitative employers.

## The Government's Response to Date

The Australian Government's Migration Strategy, which was published in December 2023, made preventing migrant worker exploitation a core priority. This year, the government has sought to address this problem through legislation that enhances government oversight of employers who sponsor skilled workers in Australia. It has also introduced a new visa intended to give migrant workers the ability to pursue workplace justice, and new protections against visa cancellation for exploited workers.

While these reforms are a welcome step in the right direction, broader changes to Australia's immigration system are required to prevent workplace exploitation and the associated risk of migrant workers becoming victims of contemporary forms of slavery.

## Recommendations

As long as the immigration system perpetuates a power imbalance between employers and people with precarious visa statuses, migrant worker exploitation and modern slavery will persist.

To address and prevent exploitation and slavery-like conditions in Australian workplaces, we make the following recommendations:

- **Enable all visa holders to change employers** without jeopardising their visa pathway.
- **Provide clear pathways to permanent residency** for everyone who wants to stay in Australia long-term.
- **Ensure access to quality immigration advice** by properly funding specialist community legal centres that offer free and confidential legal advice to exploited migrant workers.

---

<sup>1</sup> Grattan Institute. (2023, May). *Short-changed: How to stop the exploitation of migrant workers in Australia*.

<sup>2</sup> This includes both temporary visa holders and unlawful people whose visas have expired.

## INTRODUCTION

The Immigration Advice and Rights Centre (**IARC**) is a not-for-profit, specialist community legal centre (**CLC**) providing free legal advice and assistance to people throughout New South Wales. IARC is the only CLC in Australia that advises on all immigration, refugee, and citizenship matters.

In 2019, IARC partnered with Unions NSW, the peak body for trade unions and union members in New South Wales, to create Visa Assist, which provides both employment and immigration law advice in one service. Many clients referred to Visa Assist have experienced workplace exploitation and require advice from IARC on safely leaving exploitative situations without jeopardising their visa status.

This report documents some of the most severe cases of migrant worker exploitation that IARC has encountered over the five years of Visa Assist, with some clients suffering slavery-like conditions at the hands of unscrupulous employers. The report examines the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (**PALM**) scheme because IARC has advised many vulnerable clients in this scheme, both through regional outreach trips and the Visa Assist service. The scheme is a breeding ground for contemporary forms of slavery. The report also critiques the employer sponsorship of temporary visa holders for enabling widespread exploitation that can amount to modern slavery.

Certain visas such as the Working Holiday Maker visa (subclass 417 and subclass 462) and the Student visa (subclass 500) also grant employers significant power over migrant workers, often leading to abuse. IARC has assisted many Working Holiday Maker visa holders who have been mistreated by rural employers while fulfilling specific work requirements to be eligible for their next visa. We have similarly advised Student visa holders whose employers threatened them with visa cancellation for exceeding the 48-hour per fortnight work limit, effectively silencing these workers and enabling widespread exploitation. Although this report does not comment further on these visas, these accounts of exploitation exemplify the central theme of the report: the problematic consequences arising from the significant power imbalance between employers and migrant workers.

This year, the Federal Government has initiated some reforms aimed at reducing this imbalance. It has launched a couple of two-year pilots: the Workplace Justice Visa (**WJV**) and Strengthening Reporting Protections (**SRP**) pilots. It has expanded visa portability rights for certain Skilled visa subclasses, giving visa holders more time to seek a new employer to sponsor them. And it has advanced legislation to enhance government oversight of employers who sponsor migrant workers.

However, these reforms are modest and have substantial limitations, which this report outlines. Comprehensive changes to Australia's immigration system are needed to protect migrant workers and ensure they can exercise their workplace rights.

The report concludes with IARC's recommendations for creating a fair, just, and accessible immigration system that better protects migrant workers from exploitation and contemporary forms of slavery.

## PACIFIC AUSTRALIA LABOUR MOBILITY SCHEME

The exploitation of workers under the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (**PALM**) scheme is well documented.<sup>3</sup> This partly reflects the fact most PALM workers are employed in sectors the UN Special Rapporteur has identified as being at high risk of modern slavery: in particular, agriculture, horticulture, and meat processing. Increasingly, many PALM workers also work in the aged care sector.

The scheme also permits employers to make a variety of lawful pay deductions – including for airfares to and from the Pacific Islands, travel within Australia, and visa processing costs, to name just a few<sup>4</sup> – which creates a highly vulnerable and impoverished workforce. Despite the introduction of a minimum pay guarantee of \$200 per week, reports of underpayment continue.<sup>5</sup>

However, the driver of exploitation that this report examines is the restrictive visa settings. PALM workers are tied to the employer that sponsored them, meaning that workers in the long-term stream of the program cannot change employers for up to four years, unless they receive approval from the Department of Employment and Work Relations (**DEWR**).<sup>6</sup>

The PALM scheme functions as a ‘guest worker’ program<sup>7</sup>, with workers in fruit picking and meat processing unable to exit the scheme and stay in Australia after completing their work because of a lack of Skilled visa options thereafter. While certain employers may be able to sponsor PALM workers in aged care for permanent residence, they have little incentive to do so because they can simply wait for the next intake of PALM workers.

Tacitly recognising that most PALM workers are unable to exit the scheme onto alternative visa pathways, the Australian Government introduced a new permanent visa – the Pacific Engagement visa (subclass 192) – for Pacific Islanders in March 2024. However, this visa is awarded through a ballot system, which IARC opposes due to its inherent unfairness; it reduces the serious pursuit of permanent residence to a lottery.

The remainder of this section details IARC’s work with PALM workers. IARC has provided support and legal advice to these workers through two primary channels: regional outreach trips, which allow for in-person engagement, and the Visa Assist program, through which PALM workers are referred to IARC for assistance.

### **Regional outreach trips**

From November 2022 to February 2024, IARC participated in a series of forums across key fruit-picking areas in regional Australia. The forums were organised by the supermarkets

---

<sup>3</sup> Australia Institute. (2023, December). *The PALM scheme: Labour rights for our Pacific partners*; NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner. (2024, September). *Be Our Guests: Addressing urgent modern slavery risks for temporary migrant workers in rural and regional New South Wales*.

<sup>4</sup> Commonwealth Government. (2023). *PALM scheme Approved Employer Guidelines* (1 July 2024 ed.). Retrieved November 11, 2024, from [PALM scheme Approved Employer Guidelines -1 July 2024.pdf](#). (pp. 40-41).

<sup>5</sup> Fair Work Ombudsman. (2024). *Alleged unlawful deductions from visa workers on potato farm*.

<sup>6</sup> Department of Home Affairs. (2024, September 23). *Pacific Australia Labour Mobility stream*. Retrieved November 11, 2024, from [Temporary Work \(International Relations\) visa \(subclass 403\) Pacific Australia Labour Mobility stream](#).

<sup>7</sup> Withers, M. (2024). Depletion through transnational social reproduction: guestworker migration and uneven development in the South Pacific, *Work in the Global Economy*, 4(1): 30–51.

Coles and Woolworths, in partnership with the Retail Supply Chain Alliance (RSCA), as a way to engage migrant workers within the supermarkets’ fruit and vegetable supply chains. The RSCA, a coalition of the Australian Workers’ Union (**AWU**), the Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association (**SDA**), and the Transport Workers’ Union (**TWU**), invited IARC (through Visa Assist) to provide immigration advice to migrant workers, many of whom were in the PALM scheme. These forums took place in Swan Hill in Victoria, and Coffs Harbour in New South Wales, in November 2022; Bundaberg, Queensland, in June 2023; and Devonport, Tasmania, in February 2024.

The forums provided an opportunity for IARC to connect with PALM workers, many of whom expressed concerns over significant pay deductions that exacerbated their financial vulnerability and unsanitary living conditions in the accommodation that employers organised. The situation was particularly dire in Bundaberg, where PALM workers, unable to meet basic living expenses, lined up at soup kitchens and slept on benches in public parks.

In September 2024, IARC then embarked on a five-day outreach trip to the towns of Griffith, Leeton, and Wagga Wagga in the Riverina region of New South Wales. This trip was organised in response to strong interest from local service providers, who requested IARC’s legal expertise due to the significant local population of individuals with precarious visa statuses. Table 1 below details some salient statistics about the clients in the Riverina region that IARC advised on this trip.

**Table 1**

*IARC’s clients in the Riverina region (September 2024)*

Category	Number of people
Total number of clients advised	<b>42</b>
PALM scheme workers	9
Migration failure/fraud	11
No viable pathway to remain in Australia	11
Undocumented workers	12

IARC advised 42 clients over the five-day trip. Each legal advice session lasts approximately one hour with a solicitor. Our solicitors recorded the remaining statistics only when a client divulged this information during a legal advice session. It is likely therefore that each statistic is under-recorded because some clients did not disclose certain information.

The recorded data presents a concerning picture of a precarious workforce, preyed upon by dubious migration agents, lacking both viable visa options and work rights. Over 20% of the clients IARC advised came to Australia under the PALM scheme, highlighting the prevalence

of PALM workers in the Riverina region, as documented by other reports.<sup>8</sup> Most of these PALM workers had 'disengaged' from the scheme, leaving their approved employment to seek alternative work, usually as a result of exploitation.

Both PALM workers and other migrant labourers in the Riverina region have suffered from 'migration failure', meaning they have received poor quality immigration advice from local migration agents who lodge visa applications on their behalf without proper eligibility checks. We also saw instances of 'migration fraud' whereby agents charged desperate workers extortionate fees to lodge mostly unmeritorious visa applications, compounding their financial hardship.

Having a visa refused in Australia can significantly limit future migration pathways. Under s 48 of the *Migration Act 1958* (Cth), non-citizens in Australia who do not hold a substantive visa and whose visa applications are refused can only apply for a select list of prescribed visas thereafter. The list includes Protection visas, which are only available to people who can demonstrate there is a real chance they would suffer serious or significant harm in their home country if they were returned there; Partner visas, which are available to people with an Australian partner; just three Skilled visa subclasses; and Bridging visas. Most people whose visas are refused end up holding Bridging visas, which employers often distrust due to uncertainty about the visa holder's length of stay in Australia and eligibility for work rights. As a result, Bridging visa holders face limited employment options and, if they find work, it is often unstable cash-in-hand jobs.

11 clients were assessed as having no viable visa options to remain in Australia. This high number was partly the consequence of the poor migration advice that clients had previously received in the Riverina region limiting their migration pathways. IARC also encountered 12 undocumented workers, both a combination of unlawful people whose visas had expired and workers whose visas had no work rights. This concentration of labourers without viable migration pathways or work rights represents a vulnerable workforce at heightened risk of exploitation and modern slavery.

### **Visa Assist referrals**

Through the Visa Assist program, IARC has also supported numerous PALM scheme workers, who are frequently referred to us due to workplace exploitation or concerns about their visa status. Many of these workers seek advice because they have either experienced exploitation and wish to leave their employer, or have already left and need guidance on their visa options. Additionally, a significant number of clients have been dismissed by their employers and threatened with deportation, usually on an impending flight.

The threats of deportation that PALM workers regularly experience underscores the lack of accessible information they receive about their visa status and workplace rights. Many clients do not realise that employers do not possess the legal authority to deport migrant workers, and they fear deportation even when they have considerable time remaining on their visa. In our experience, this coercive behaviour is more common for PALM workers than other clients, and reflects discrimination due to language barriers and limited knowledge of workplace rights.

---

<sup>8</sup> NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner. (2024, September). *Be Our Guests: Addressing urgent modern slavery risks for temporary migrant workers in rural and regional New South Wales*.

Some of our most vulnerable PALM worker clients, such as Kyle (case study below), who was referred to us through the Visa Assist program, have experienced slavery-like conditions in their workplace.

CASE STUDY:

**KYLE\***

Kyle moved from Samoa to Australia in search of a better life for his family. He arrived on a Temporary Work (International Relations) (subclass 403) visa to work in fruit picking on a regional farm. Kyle's employer made significant deductions from his weekly pay, leaving him uncertain about his take-home earnings. Without an interpreter to explain his workplace rights, he could not determine whether these deductions were lawful. Unfortunately, as a PALM worker, the conditions on Kyle's visa required him to stay with the employer that sponsored him, with very limited grounds on which his sponsorship could be transferred to another employer within the PALM scheme.

One day, Kyle was injured at his workplace in an accident. Kyle was stapling together boxes with a staple gun. He had not been provided with suitable safety equipment and a staple ended up lodged in his eye. Doctors advised Kyle he could return to work but only to complete light duties and to avoid dust and dirt.

He was forced to continue doing difficult tasks, including lifting 20-kilogram bags of fruit. He was given safety goggles, but they made his eye injury worse, trapping sweat and dirt in the puncture site. It left him with significant vision loss in one of his eyes and he had to undergo multiple surgeries. Due to the pressure imbalance that the puncture injury caused, he also experienced pain in his uninjured eye.

Prior to Kyle's arrival in Australia, his employer managed his visa applications. After his injury, they were supposed to apply for another visa on his behalf, but the application was never made. Eventually, Kyle discovered he was unlawful. It meant he had no visa options to remain in Australia to pursue action against his employer for work health and safety breaches, or pursue the medical treatment he required to manage his injury. This treatment was not available in Samoa.

Kyle was referred to IARC through the Visa Assist program. Alongside a community activist, IARC spent two years advocating on Kyle's behalf and worked tirelessly to secure him a ministerial intervention because of the compelling circumstances of his situation. Kyle was granted permanent residency in 2023. It allowed him to remain in Australia for medical treatment and sponsor his family to join him in Australia.

\*Name altered to protect client confidentiality

Kyle was fortunate. Ministerial interventions are discretionary and are only given in very exceptional cases. There are thousands of exploited workers who cannot rely on that pathway, including the vast majority of PALM workers, hence the urgent need to reform this program.

## TEMPORARY SKILLED MIGRATION

Over the past five years of the Visa Assist program, IARC has provided legal advice to numerous workers whose employers have sponsored them on temporary Skilled visas. Many of these workers have endured workplace exploitation and in the most severe cases, slavery-like conditions. Employer sponsored temporary visa holders generally need an employer to also nominate them for permanent residency. Furthermore, to access permanent residency sooner, the temporary visa holder must stay with the same employer for a prescribed period of time before being nominated by that same employer for permanent residence.

While many employers play by the rules and treat their employees fairly, the inherent power imbalance in these sponsorship arrangements leaves workers vulnerable to exploitation. Often, the promise of permanent residency is used as an incentive to keep temporary visa holders in exploitative work environments. There is also no obligation for an employer to nominate the employee for permanent residency, so we often see the offer either never realised or withdrawn just before the worker's current visa expires.

The following case studies illustrate the severe impacts this dependency can have on temporary visa holders.

### CASE STUDY:

#### **MASSAGE THERAPISTS**

In 2014, six women were sponsored on Temporary Work (Skilled) (subclass 457) visas from the Philippines as massage therapists. When they arrived in Australia, they were subject to slavery-like conditions by their employer. They were forced to sleep on the floor in the sponsor's accommodation (all in the same room). They worked 6 days a week for over 12 hours each day. They were restricted from leaving the home and from forming any relationships. They were told what they could eat and drink, and even forced to eat from dog bowls. They were also grossly underpaid and were forced to pay back certain "costs" to their employer from their already low wage.

If the women breached any rules set by their sponsor, they were threatened with their visas being cancelled and they would be removed from Australia and their families killed.

They were eventually sponsored for permanent residency by their employer. After which, they managed to escape and seek help from the Salvation Army and eventually join a union. The employer's visa nomination was refused by the Department of Home Affairs (in part due to their treatment of workers). This in turn meant that the women's permanent residency applications were also refused at the Department stage and on appeal at the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. This refusal meant that the six women were unable to apply for almost all other visas while in Australia.

All of the women were referred to IARC through the Visa Assist program. IARC appealed for ministerial intervention, and eventually all six women were granted permanent residency in 2023.



This case study highlights a fundamental failure of Australian immigration law in protecting vulnerable workers. Because the massage therapists' pathway to permanent residency depended on their employer, they were penalised for their employer's misconduct by having their visa applications refused.

Workers across various sectors and skill levels are at risk of exploitation because of this reliance on their employers. The case study of Francis below underlines how even so-called 'highly skilled' migrants can be subject to extreme workplace exploitation.

#### CASE STUDY:

### **FRANCIS\***

Francis was sponsored by an accounting firm on a Temporary Skills Shortage (subclass 482) visa. The firm promised him permanent residency, which requires two years of full-time employment with the same sponsoring employer. However, as a condition of this promise, the firm deducted over \$10,000 from his salary in instalments over two years.

Francis refrained from complaining or leaving due to his employer's repeated assurances of permanent residence. However, he was ultimately made redundant, and his application for a permanent visa was withdrawn. Following his dismissal, Francis had just 60 days to secure new employment or risk visa cancellation. During this period, he had no work rights in Australia, and they could only be reinstated if granted a new subclass 482 visa with a new employer.

Francis's experience illustrates the vulnerability of temporary Skilled visa holders, who may endure mistreatment in the hopes of eventual sponsorship. If dropped by an employer, they face the challenge of finding a new sponsor within a short timeframe, potentially entering a similar cycle of exploitation.

When Francis sought help from IARC, he was fortunate to have an Australian partner. We advised him to lodge an onshore Partner visa application, securing an alternative pathway to permanent residence. However, many visa holders in similar situations do not have this option.

\*Name altered to protect client confidentiality

These clients were fortunate to secure pathways to permanent residency – the massage therapists through ministerial intervention and Francis because of his relationship with an Australian partner. However, many temporary visa holders are not so lucky. When dismissed by their employer, they often face the prospect of leaving Australia if they cannot secure another employer within a short timeframe. This reality explains why the Australian Government has recently sought to reform the immigration system in order to better protect migrant workers from exploitation and reduce the risk of modern slavery.

## AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT REFORMS

In December 2023, the Federal Government made preventing migrant worker exploitation one of the core goals in its Migration Strategy.<sup>9</sup> This year, it has launched a couple of two-year pilots: the Workplace Justice Visa (**WJV**) and Strengthening Reporting Protections (**SRP**) pilots. The WJV is a temporary, substantive visa that allows temporary visa holders to stay in Australia for up to 12 months to take legal action if they have been exploited at work. The new reporting protections under the SRP pilot compel the Department of Home Affairs to consider whether workplace exploitation has occurred when deciding whether to cancel a person's visa. If an accredited third party can certify that the visa holder breached the conditions of their visa because of exploitation, the visa should not be cancelled.

The Government has also expanded portability rights for certain Skilled visa subclasses. This change has given many temporary visa holders up to 180 days to find a new employer, a significant increase on the previous limit of 60 or 90 days (depending on the visa subclass).<sup>10</sup>

Lastly, the *Migration Amendment (Strengthening Sponsorship and Nomination Processes) Bill 2024* is progressing through Parliament. This Bill establishes a register of approved sponsors to enhance government oversight of employers who sponsor skilled workers.

While these reforms are welcome, they are modest and have substantial limitations, as this section outlines.

### Table 2

*IARC legal advice to clients who reported experiencing workplace exploitation (July to October 2024)*

Category	Number of clients
Total number of clients that reported experiencing workplace exploitation	55
Eligible for Workplace Justice Visa (WJV)	18
Eligible for Strengthened Reporting Protections (SRP)	5
Able to exercise visa portability rights	9
No viable pathway to remain in Australia	7

<sup>9</sup> Australian Government. (2023). *Migration Strategy: Getting migration working for the nation*. (p. 12).

<sup>10</sup> Department of Home Affairs. (2024, June 21). *Visa conditions 8107, 8607 and 8608 are changing*. Retrieved November 05, 2024, from [News page](#).

Table 2 summarises IARC’s legal advice to the 55 clients who reported experiencing workplace exploitation between July (when the WJV and SRP pilots were launched) and October 2024. Some clients received multiple types of advice: for instance, they were advised they were eligible for the strengthened protections from visa cancellation, and the visa portability rights for certain Skilled visa subclasses.

Overall, 21 clients were assessed to be eligible for the new pilots. 18 people were deemed eligible for the WJV, and 5 for the SRP, with 2 clients qualifying for both pilots. 34 clients were deemed ineligible for both pilots and therefore, sought alternative options such as the enhanced visa portability rights (for which 9 clients were eligible) or other visas, such as another Skilled visa, or a Partner visa. Unfortunately, 7 clients were advised that they had no viable pathway to remain in Australia to pursue workplace justice, despite the establishment of the pilots to combat workplace exploitation.

The high number of exploited workers who were ineligible for the pilots highlights the gaps in the recent Government reforms. There are several reasons for the limited coverage of the pilots. There is a small window in which to apply for the WJV: an applicant must either hold a substantive visa with work rights with no more than 28 days remaining, or have previously held a substantive visa with work rights that has expired no more than 28 days before the day of the visa application. This tight time frame places undue pressure on specialist immigration community legal centres such as IARC, as well as accredited third parties certifying claims of workplace exploitation. It has meant that meritorious applicants have unjustly missed out on accessing the WJV because they have been unable to obtain certification in time.

The eligibility criteria for the WJV are equally narrow. The visa is not available to people who hold Bridging visas (for more than 28 days) or substantive visas without work rights. Nor is it available to unlawful people whose visas expired more than 28 days ago. Therefore, some of the most vulnerable labourers – many of whom, as this report has shown, are concentrated in remote areas such as the Riverina region in New South Wales – are unable to access this pilot.

Meanwhile, many workers lack confidence in the SRP pilot due to the present drafting of the protections in the *Migration Regulations 1994* (Cth) (**Regulations**). Contrary to the intentions of the pilot to provide a non-discretionary protection against visa cancellation, the Regulations grant the Minister (or their delegate) discretion to determine whether there is a connection between the breach of a work-related visa condition and workplace exploitation. Given this drafting, IARC has had to explain both in legal advice sessions and community legal education that there is still a discretionary element to the supposedly non-discretionary protections. The likely effect of this advice has been that either some people have elected not to have their claim certified or have not come forward to seek advice on the new protections, instead remaining in exploitative employment.

Concerningly, IARC has also encountered PALM workers who disengaged from the PALM scheme due to workplace exploitation and had their visas cancelled under s 116(1)(g) of the *Migration Act 1958* (Cth). As a consequence, these workers cannot access the SRP pilot because the cancellation protections only relate to s 116(1)(b) of the *Migration Act*.

The exclusion of PALM workers from the SRP pilot adds insult to injury after these same workers were also left out of the expansion of visa portability rights in July. PALM workers must still obtain approval from the Department of Employment and Work Relations (**DEWR**)

to leave their approved employer. Unsurprisingly, three of the seven clients whom IARC advised had no viable options to remain in Australia during the four-month reporting period were disengaged PALM workers. The remaining four clients either held Bridging visas for long periods or substantive visas without work rights and were therefore, ineligible for the WJV and SRP pilots.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Broader changes to Australia's immigration system are required to prevent workplace exploitation and the associated risk of migrant workers becoming victims of contemporary forms of slavery. Specifically, we make the following recommendations.

### **Enable all visa holders to change employers**

To reduce the power imbalance between employers and migrant workers, all visa holders should be free to change employers without jeopardising their visa pathway. This can in part be done by expanding the new enhanced visa portability rights to all visa holders, including PALM workers. This systemic change would encourage employers to create welcoming workplaces, knowing that workers could leave for better conditions elsewhere. The change should also be accompanied by widespread education on Australian workplace rights, so migrant workers understand that employers cannot threaten them with visa cancellation or deportation.

### **Provide clear pathways to permanent residency**

While not everyone plans to stay in Australia permanently, people who do should have clear pathways to permanent residency. After a set period working in Australia, migrant workers should be permitted to apply for permanent visas independently of their employers. Pacific Islander labourers, too, deserve a fair and straightforward process to gain permanent residency, rather than the current random ballot system. Temporary visa holders should be able to secure permanent residence through their own efforts, without relying on employers or the chance of a lottery.

### **Ensure access to quality immigration advice**

Properly funding specialist community legal centres (CLCs) like IARC is essential to ensure more exploited migrant workers receive free, confidential, and credible legal advice. Without access to quality immigration advice, dubious migration agents will take advantage of these workers and lodge unmeritorious visa applications on their behalf, limiting future migration pathways. These agents also charge extortionate fees, further impoverishing workers already facing financial hardship. This cycle of events, observed in the Riverina region of New South Wales, can be significantly disrupted with substantial funding boosts to CLCs like IARC.

#### **IMMIGRATION ADVICE AND RIGHTS CENTRE Inc and Unions NSW**

**Dr. Jake Davies**  
Senior Policy Officer

**Joshua Strutt**  
CEO and Principal Solicitor

**Thomas Costa**  
Assistant Secretary (Unions NSW)

**Kristie Mellor**  
Senior Solicitor

**Danniel Pereira**  
Senior Solicitor

**Lauri Stewart**  
Knowledge Lawyer