



**HUMAN TRAFFICKING WORKING GROUP**  
Dr Andreas Schloenhardt (Coordinator)

The University of Queensland  
TC Beirne School of Law

The University of British Columbia  
Centre of International Relations

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## NEWS REPORT

<b>Headline</b>	<b>Couple win appeal; retrials ordered in slave hearing</b>
<b>Reported in</b>	<i>Townsville Bulletin</i>
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<b>Related reports</b>	January 1, 2008 – Sex slave couple appeal judgements

A HUSBAND and wife from Weipa who were jailed after a jury found them guilty of slavery have won their appeals against conviction and will face a new trial in the Supreme Court.

Zoltan Kovacs appealed against convictions for possessing a slave and for using a slave, each verdict drawing concurrent eight year terms.

His wife, Melita Kovacs appealed against her convictions for intentionally possessing a slave and a second count of exercising power over a slave.

For each of these convictions, Mrs Kovacs was sentenced to four years concurrent jail terms.

Neither of them appealed against their convictions and one year sentences for the lesser charge of arranging a marriage to avoid visa restrictions.

At their trial, the jury heard that the Kovacs owned a store in Napranum, near Weipa.

In 2002, they decided to bring a Filipino woman to Australia to work in the shop and be their housekeeper.

Kovacs and a friend, Balint Olasz, decided to go to the Philippines to find a suitable woman, whom Mr Olasz, an Australian citizen, would marry to entitle her to an entry permit.

Through a contact, the Kovacs found a 25-year-old factory worker, who had an ill son and an ailing mother.

The woman was promised \$800 a month, and was told she'd have to marry a white Australian man in order to assist in getting a visa, but the marriage would be a fake.

The woman and Mr Olasz were married in the Phillipines in January 2001, with Mr Olasz returning to Australia soon after, leaving the woman to start making arrangements for a visa.

Mr Olasz eventually organised the paperwork, and the woman arrived in Cairns in August 2002, where she was met at the airport by Zoltan Kovacs.

The court was told that he immediately took her to a motel, where, in the course of a few days, he raped her on three occasions.

They then drove to Weipa, where she was put to work in the shop and at the Kovacs' house.

She worked 12-hour days in the shop, and any other free time was taken up with domestic work at the home.

Kovacs had sex with the woman at the shop two or three mornings a week before the other employee arrived.

Kovacs sometimes paid her \$20 to \$30 on these occasions, calling the cash 'pocket money'.

He also raped her at the house when his wife wasn't home.

The jury was told that the woman made no complaint because she didn't want her sick mother to have any stress or anxiety.

In October, 2002, the woman tried to escape but was forcibly brought back to the house and had her passport taken away by the couple.

Around Christmas that year, the Kovacs' estranged daughter visited the home while Mr Kovacs was overseas.

The daughter started driving the woman to work each morning and after a couple of days, the woman told her about the rapes and her overall situation.

The daughter agreed to help, and along with the other shop worker, provided money which allowed the woman to fly to Cairns to escape.

The Court of Appeal in Brisbane considered seven grounds of appeal, and dismissed all but two of them.

These involved the manner in which the judge summed up and gave directions to the jury in relation to the value of certain parts of the evidence.

The appeals were allowed and the verdicts of guilty in all but the marriage arranging conviction were set aside and retrials ordered.

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