



**HUMAN TRAFFICKING WORKING GROUP**  
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## NEWS REPORT

<b>Headline</b>	Visa restrictions eased for sex trafficking victims
<b>Reported in</b>	The Age
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Victims of sex trafficking will find it easier to obtain Australian visas under changes soon to be made by the Federal Government. Currently, victims of sex trafficking who are brought to Australia but do not have a valid visa can get a temporary visa only if they are willing to help police in their case in prosecuting traffickers. Those who do not help police face removal from the country unless they have another visa entitling them to stay in Australia. But the change will allow women to be granted a temporary visa for up to 45 days even if they do not cooperate with police. They will also be entitled to support services to help them with legal advice, counselling and accommodation.

To be granted a permanent visa, they will still be expected to cooperate with police, but the expected contribution will be reduced. They are currently required to make a "significant contribution" to a police investigation in order to be granted a permanent visa. The change will mean they will only be expected to display a willingness to make a "contribution". Their immediate family members will also be eligible for a visa.

Minister for the Status of Women Tanya Plibersek said the changes were designed to protect women who had been trafficked and who might want to help but had only limited information. "There are some people who are willing to help the police but the information they hold is not enough to provide a conviction. They might not know the names of the people who trafficked them," she said. "It is about their willingness to assist in that instance."

Ms Plibersek said prosecutions had been dropped in the past because of lack of evidence. "That's not been the fault of the person who has been trafficked," she said. "They've been willing to assist police but the prosecution hasn't proceeded. It's about their willingness to assist the police rather than the successful conclusion of the case." But she said this would not open grounds for those who had already gone back to their country to return to Australia.

The Government will announce the changes today at a discussion on sex trafficking it is hosting in Canberra.

Project Respect, a support agency for women in the sex industry and women who have been trafficked, has been campaigning for all trafficking victims to be granted visas. Project Respect coordinator Nina Vallins said trafficked women should be eligible for visas regardless of their ability or willingness to contribute to an investigation. She welcomed the Government's changes. "That will be an amazing advance for the rights of victims of trafficking, but the devil is still in the detail," she said.

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