



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC ANTI-SLAVERY NETWORK RELEASE

VOICES OF EXPLOITED WORKERS CRY OUT FOR JUSTICE IN AUSTRALIAN CONSTRUCTION SECTOR

“His boss stop [sic] first aid from doing their job [when he was injured]. The site manager said: ‘Those are my people. They don't even have a right to work, what can they do about it. I can do whatever I want to them.’”

“We have no power because of the visa. Sometimes we work construction jobs 7am to 7pm, for six days. We only got \$300. We can't pay our rent because we are struggling for regular work.”

“There is a company who brings in Chinese workers from overseas. They took their passport, and they're living in a flat together – they just go to work together every morning and then go home. Other providers stopped doing that work because they could not compete with the prices. The workers are not allowed to speak English. You can't ask their pay, they say, ‘me not English’, even though they do understand English.”

Stories of labour exploitation obtained by ACAN's Modern Slavery Remediation service, Domus 8.7, feature in a new Property Council resource for the Australian construction sector.

Ten construction workers shared their experiences with Domus 8.7 Program Manager, Jenny Stanger, for the Property Council of Australia publication, *Indicators of vulnerability to modern slavery in property and construction*.

“These workers have many indicators of forced labour - underpayment, non-payment, excessive hours, deceptive recruitment, retention of identity documents, restriction of movement and association,” Jenny Stanger said.

“We thank the workers, whose identities remain concealed, for sharing their powerful stories to draw attention to the conditions that too many in their industry are working in right now.”

“This resource and these workers' testaments are a wake-up call about the level of exposure faced by Catholic organisations undertaking building and construction projects,” Ms Stanger said.



The recent [ACAN executive summary](#) publishes aggregated data of spend by Catholic organisations with suppliers in industries and sectors considered high risk for modern slavery.

A total of \$1.43 billion was spent on building and construction projects during the most recent reporting period across Catholic education, community services, health and aged care.

“Australian Catholic organisations spend more on building and construction than any other category with a high risk of modern slavery. After six years of the Modern Slavery Act, leadership should be communicating clear expectations of property developers, prior to awarding tenders.”

“The risk of forced labour is even greater when large suppliers, involved in major construction projects, fail to comply with the Modern Slavery Act. This is something quick and easy to check on the [Modern Slavery Statements Register](#).”

“We strongly encourage building project managers in Catholic organisations to deploy ACAN Program tools and resources to mitigate risk to construction workers on site.”

The Property Council launched [Indicators of vulnerability to modern slavery in property and construction](#) in Sydney on 14 August.

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Photo: Jenny Stanger, ACAN Program Manager

Photos credit: Alexander Legaree

Contact: Jenny Stanger, ACAN Program Manager 02 9307 8464

Australian Catholic Anti-slavery Network: www.acan.org.au