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Migration reforms must protect migrant workers from visa cancellations

Today's announcement [by the Albanese government](#) acknowledges what many migrant workers have known all along: there must be greater protections for migrant workers experiencing exploitation. The announcement today recognises that changes are needed but there is still no practical mechanism in place that protects migrant workers from having their visas cancelled if they speak out against exploitation.

Democracy in Colour National Director, Neha Madhok said "While the changes announced today are a step in the right direction, they do nothing to address the core issue that enables the discrimination and exploitation of migrant workers. Most migrants who find themselves in discriminatory or exploitative conditions say nothing because they fear risking their visa status and employability.

"The real issue is that migrant workers aren't protected if they speak out against their employers for exploitation or discrimination. The Government must ensure that protections against visa cancellations are included in migration reforms.

"It's time to acknowledge the gross power imbalance that exists between migrant workers and employers who control whether a migrant is allowed to stay in the country or not by controlling their visa status. Employers know they can continue practices like wage theft and breaching fair work laws because the visa statuses of migrant workers are not protected or secure.

"The Government must provide migrant workers with visa security that allows them to advocate for their rights without risking their income, employability, and right to work and stay in the country.

"Temporary migrants already face discrimination and significant barriers finding and maintaining work in the first place. Today's announcement acknowledges that employers have used the broken migration system to continue exploiting migrant workers. It's time to centre the rights of migrant workers themselves in any future reforms, and ensure that they are protected if they rightfully call out workplace exploitation and discrimination.

"Australia's economy continues to rely on the work of migrants, international students, and others on temporary visas, yet migrants aren't afforded the same protections as all Australians. The Government must ensure that all reforms to the migration system truly protects migrant workers and treats everyone in Australia with dignity" said Neha Madhok.

MEDIA CONTACT: Neha Madhok - 0452 509 873

The [Migration with Dignity](#) campaign calls for clearer pathways to permanent migration, ending corporate ties to temporary migration sponsorship and allowing working migrants access to public services including Medicare.

Democracy in Colour is a national racial and economic justice movement of over 16,000 members that advocates for people of colour and multicultural communities across the country. Read more at democracyincolour.org