

Human Trafficking

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KEY STATEMENT

As a member of the International Council of Nurses (ICN), the Australian College of Nursing (ACN) endorses [ICN's Position on The Basics of What Nurses Need to Know on Human Trafficking](#) (ICN 2019); and supports the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to treat all people respectfully, humanely and with dignity. Men, women and children across the globe are trafficked for a wide range of exploitative purposes including servitude, slavery, forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, or organ harvesting (AFP 2020). The International Organization for Migration has stated that roughly 800,000 people are trafficked across international borders annually, with an estimated 2.5 million people forced into exploitative labour (Australian Government – Department of Home Affairs 2020). Individuals from Asia, particularly Thailand, Korea, the Philippines and Malaysia are primarily targeted for human trafficking into Australia (APF 2020).

Nursing's essential contribution to human trafficking is evident in the *World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030* (WHO 2015) in the era of the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). ACN is supportive of the SDG targets that directly impact health and affect all countries irrespective of income status – not just Millennium Developmental Goals (MDGs) ending in 2015 which directly affected developing countries (White 2015). One of these SDG targets which aims to address areas of inequality is to “end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children”.

As the national professional leader of the nursing profession, ACN consistently advocates for basic human rights for all people receiving and accessing care within the Australian health care system. Nurses have a professional, ethical and moral obligation to provide the ‘right care and support’ to individuals at the ‘right time’. ACN strongly emphasises the requirement for nurses to practice within their regulatory and legislative frameworks and to adhere to their professional code of ethics and conduct. Specifically, the ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses, 2012 (NMBA 2020):

- recognises “inherent in nursing is a respect for human rights, including [...] choice, to dignity and to be treated with respect”; and
- have established legally mandated ethical conduct including nursing action to “meet the health and social needs of the public, in particular those of vulnerable populations” (Element 1: Nurses & People).

ACN is aware that there are vulnerable populations living within Australian communities who are more likely to fall victim to abuse associated with human trafficking. Vulnerability has been defined as:

“[...] those inherent, environmental or contextual factors that increase the susceptibility of an individual or group to being trafficked.” (UNODC 2013)

Vulnerable populations include migrants, displaced persons, refugees and asylum seekers (ACN, April 2019), individuals from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) peoples, individuals from poor socioeconomic backgrounds, and those living in rural and remote communities. Factors which may increase an individual's position of vulnerability (Figure 1) include age, illness, gender, sexuality, religious and cultural beliefs, lack of social network, poverty, isolation, dependency and legal status (UNODC 2013).

Figure 1. Factors influencing vulnerability to human trafficking (Labour exploitation 2016)

<p>POVERTY</p> <p>The need to survive and provide for one's family can increase risk for being trafficked.</p>	<p>LANGUAGE BARRIERS</p> <p>An inability to communicate can isolate victims and increase reliance on abusers for help or work in order to survive.</p>	<p>RELIGIOUS BELIEFS</p> <p>This may influence perceptions of the abusive situation and increase vulnerability due to fear of punishment from a higher being or fear of exclusion.</p>
<p>DISABILITY & ILLNESS</p> <p>Physical or mental illness and disability can increase vulnerability due to reduced understanding/ capacity and reliance on others.</p>	<p>INEQUALITY & DISCRIMINATION</p> <p>Members of minority groups may have fewer rights and options, or face isolation and exclusion which can increase risk for exploitation and abuse.</p>	<p>CULTURAL BELIEFS</p> <p>This may influence perceptions of the abusive situation and increase vulnerability due to fear of punishment from a higher being or fear of exclusion.</p>
<p>LACK OF LEGAL STATUS</p> <p>Individuals may fear authorities, being arrested or deported and are less likely to report abuse.</p>	<p>HOMELESSNESS</p> <p>Individuals are often targeted with the promise of worse accommodation and are easily coerced due to mental & physical health issues and substance use.</p>	<p>ROMANTIC & FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS</p> <p>These may put pressure on individuals out of duty, responsibility, love or a sense of no alternative.</p>

BACKGROUND

What is Human Trafficking?

Human trafficking is a complex process of exploitation, transportation and abduction or recruitment of a victim, whereby a victim of human trafficking can be a child (aged 18 years or below) or adult including both men and women. In Australia, human trafficking offences are set out in Division 270 and 271 of the [Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995](#). Penalties for these offences can range from 4 years' imprisonment for debt bondage, to 25 years' imprisonment for trafficking of children (Department of Home Affairs 2020).

There may be a breath of crimes committed throughout the process of human trafficking, from the initial point of recruitment to the final stage of criminal proceeds (Figure 2). It is important to note that human trafficking is distinct from 'people smuggling' which is organised illegal movement of people across borders on a payment-for-service basis (AFP 2020).

There are several types of human trafficking (ICN 2020). These include:

- a. sex trafficking (e.g. online exploitation, prostitution)
- b. labour trafficking (e.g. unskilled work, farming, hospitality sector)
- c. involvement in criminal activities (e.g. cannabis cultivation, forced marriages)
- d. organ harvesting and removal.

The 2000 Palermo Protocol is one of three protocols from the 2000 UN Convention established to provide an internationally recognised framework to prevent human trafficking and support victims of human trafficking. Prior to this, human trafficking was not considered an international or transnational organised criminal activity, but rather a migration or human rights issue (Chamberlain 2005; Kingdon 1995). The 2000 Palermo Protocol recognised that human trafficking had to be dealt with internationally using criminal law (Chamberlain 2005; Kingdon 1995).

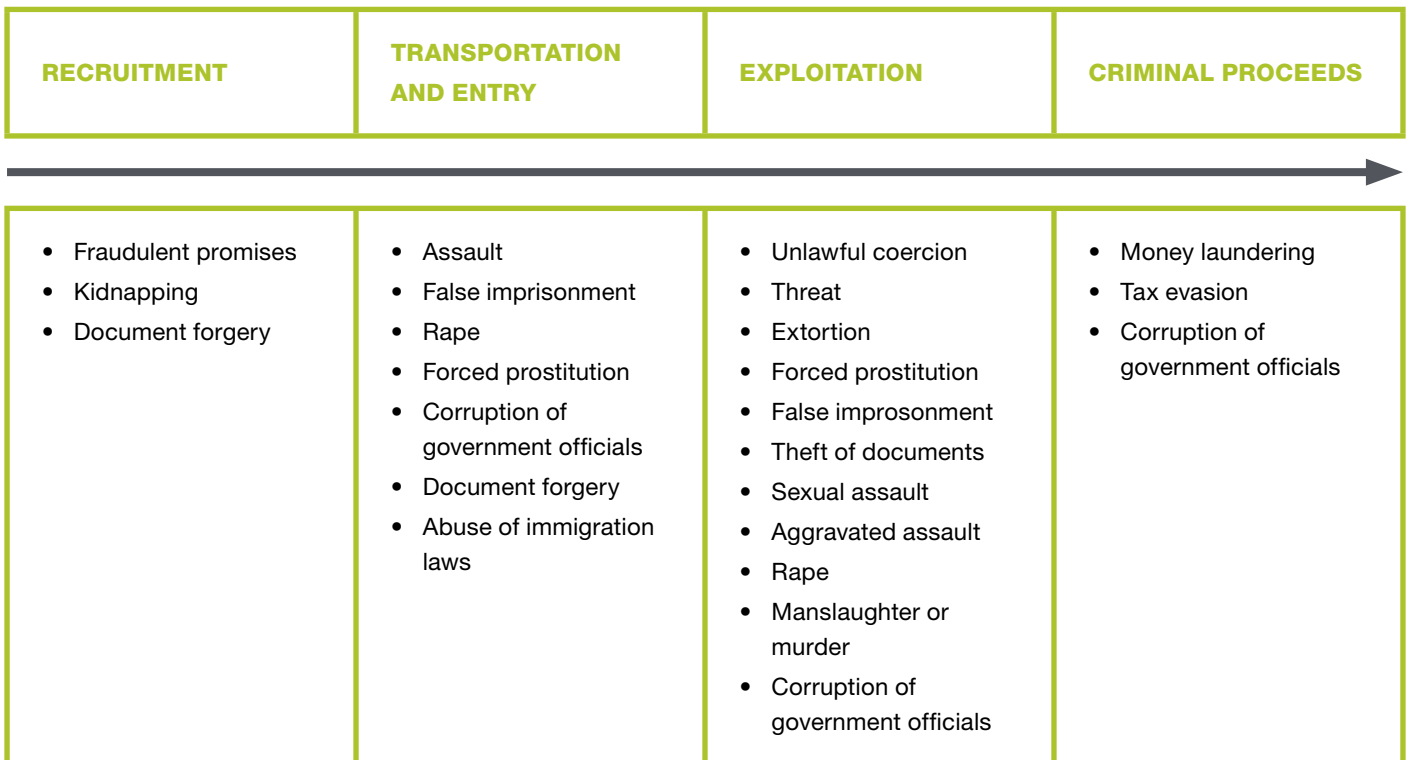
POSITION STATEMENT Human Trafficking

The 2000 Palermo Protocol defines human trafficking as:

“the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs”.

(United Nations 2001)

Figure 2. The Process of Human Trafficking (Aronowitz 2009)



THE ELEMENTS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

There are three elements (The Act; The Means; The Purpose) typically present in the human trafficking process (Figure 3), though human trafficking has still occurred if a person is rescued prior to ‘The Purpose’ (Element 3) being achieved. When children are involved, only two elements (The Means; and The Purpose) are required for human trafficking to have occurred. Children are not able to provide consent even in circumstances where they are aware of what is happening or have agreed to the act and purpose (ICN 2020).

Figure 3. The Three Elements in Human Trafficking (Aronowitz 2009; ICN 2020)

<p>ELEMENT 1: THE ACT</p> <p>“recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring, or reception of persons”</p>
<p>ELEMENT 2: THE MEANS</p> <p>“threat or use of force, coercion, abduction, fraud, deception, abuse of power or vulnerability, or giving payments or benefits to a person in control of the victim”</p>
<p>ELEMENT 3: THE PURPOSE*</p> <p>“for exploitation or the purpose of exploitation, which includes exploiting the prostitution of others, other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or similar practices, and the removal of organs”</p>

* Human Trafficking has still occurred in the absence of Element 3 ('The Purpose') being *achieved*.

Human trafficking is underpinned by a range of power and control strategies intended to coerce and deceive vulnerable individuals (ICN 2020). Coercion and deception play major roles in all three of the elements in human trafficking. The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC) defines coercion as:

“ [...] the use of force or threat thereof, and some forms of non-violent or psychological use of force or threat thereof, including but not limited to: (i) Threats of harm or physical restraint of any person; (ii) Any scheme, plan or pattern intended to cause a person to believe that failure to perform an act would result in serious harm to or physical restraint against any person; (iii) Abuse or any threat linked to the legal status of a person; (iv) Psychological pressure.” (UNODC 2009)

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) has indicated that these power and control strategies can include one or more of the following practices:

- “Economic abuse

- Coercion and threats
- Intimidation
- Emotional abuse
- Isolation
- Denying, Blaming, Minimizing
- Sexual and physical abuse as a punishment
- Using privilege or social standing
- Corruption” (ICN 2020).

INDICATORS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

ICN has provided a comprehensive list on how nurses can recognise human trafficking along with general signs to look out for in individuals suspected of being trafficked (ICN 2020). A list of general health indicators and specific sex exploitation indicators are detailed in [ICN's Position on The Basics of What Nurses Need to Know on Human Trafficking](#) (Figure 4.)

Figure 4. Indicators of Human Trafficking (ICN 2020)

GENERAL SIGNS	GENERAL HEALTH INDICATORS	SPECIFIC SEX EXPLOITATION INDICATORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Appears to have no legal or suspicious looking documentation in their possession. • Has no registration with government services, GP, schools etc. • May have travelled great distances internationally without an understanding of the processes involved in travelling. • May struggle to communicate in the local or any language. • May not be using their ‘real name’ or changes personal details. • Have no or limited understanding of time or space. • Claims to be ‘just visiting’ an area but is unable to offer times and dates of arrival and departure or addresses and phone numbers of other persons. • Vague or no next of kin details. • Appears to move location frequently. • Has no control of his/her own money. • Neglected appearance can be common due to loss of self-esteem and physical abuse. • Maintains poor eye contact and closed body language. • Appears to be withdrawn and submissive and afraid to speak to professional. • When they do speak, they display paranoia, fear, anxiety, depression, submission, tension and general nervousness. • May have old and untreated injuries with poor history related to the injury. • Is accompanied by a person who speaks on their behalf and controls the flow of information offered. • Appearing vague about the address and community where they live. • Has numerous inconsistencies in his/her story.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Malnourishment or generally poor health. • Signs of physical abuse – in particular, unexplained injuries or signs of prolonged abuse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bruises • Black eyes • Burns • Cuts • Broken bones • Broken teeth, dental pain • Multiple scars (including unusual injuries e.g. from lack of protective equipment to violence) evidence of a prolonged infection that is normally easily treated with a routine check-up. • Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STIs). • Maternity - Late booking, signs of recent birth or post-natal signs. • Mental health concerns – self harming. • Addiction to drugs and/or alcohol. • Individual has no idea of his/her last medical check-up. • Lack of healthcare insurance or registration with the services – paying with cash.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Underage sexual exploitation or prostitution of a person under 18 years of age (internationally defined as trafficking). • Suspicion the person is underage despite their claiming to be older. • Physical evidence of sexual trauma. • Evidence of untreated/ treated STI’s. • Multiple/frequent pregnancies. • Inappropriate interest in/or relationship with older men. • A large amount of sexual partners not appropriate for age or circumstances. • Inappropriate language used indicative of working in sexual exploitation of prostitution. • Evidence of a controlling relationship from a partner or another person. • Inappropriate attire for age or time of day. • Unexplained tattoos on neck or lower back and other types of branding. • Family dysfunction increasing risks. • Individuals outlook on situation and health issues inappropriately downplayed. • Lack of engagement with the services due to fear or negative outcomes after the interaction.”

THE ROLE OF THE NURSE

Nurses play a key role in detecting and protecting victims and vulnerable populations from human trafficking. As frontline health care workers, nurses in the acute and primary health care settings are well placed to identify signs in suspected human trafficking. More so, nurses have a duty of care to protect suspected victims of human trafficking and to report to the authorities. As indicated in Element 1 (Nurses & People) of the ICN Code of Ethics for Nurses (2012), nurses are legally bound to “meet the health and social needs of the public, in particular those of vulnerable populations”.

If a nurse suspects that human trafficking has occurred or is occurring, the International Council of Nurses recommends the following actions and behaviours:

- “Be sensitive and understand the individual’s experience.
- Do not place yourself or the individual in danger – notice who is around when you are talking to the individual.
- Notify the Police or relevant authorities if you suspect the individual is in danger.
- Try to record as many details and information without endangering yourself or the individual.
- In private away from others offer information of local agencies or support services that can help the individual either for immediate support or if declined on a future date when the person may feel more prepared to seek assistance.
- Contact your safeguarding lead and follow local policy when identifying potential victim of human trafficking – if no policy exists consider developing one” (ICN 2020).

Nurses need to be supported with appropriate professional development to enable them to recognise and report all forms of abuse consistent with human trafficking. Nurses should be assisted through access to education that addresses the specific health, mental well-being, cultural, and social needs of vulnerable populations to prevent human trafficking.

FURTHER RESOURCES AND REPORTING

The following list of human trafficking resources have been provided by the Australian Federal Police (AFP). These are located on the AFP information page for human trafficking along with a comprehensive list of signs that a person may be a victim of trafficking or in/at risk of a forced marriage (AFP 2020).

- [People trafficking - Department of Home Affairs](#)
- [The Bali Process on People Smuggling and Human Trafficking](#)
- [Australian Institute of Criminology](#)
- [Humantrafficking.org](#) - A web resource for combating human trafficking
- [United Nations ODC and human trafficking](#)
- [My Blue Sky](#) - online resource for preventing and addressing forced marriage in Australia.

Human Trafficking may be reported to the AFP via phone 131237 or email A OCC-Client-Liaison@afp.gov.au. However, in the case of an emergency people are advised to call 000.

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