

LABOR'S RESPONSE TO FORCED MARRIAGE

A Shorten Labor Government will overhaul Australia's response to forced marriage.

Hundreds, potentially a thousand, young Australians are at risk of forced marriage each year.

Forced marriage is an abuse of human rights. It can create a structure through which subjugation, abuse and sexual assault can occur over decades. A failure to adequately prevent, address and respond to this practice is a failure to protect individuals – including young people and children – from crime and abuse.

Australia's current approach to forced marriage is not working. Under the Turnbull Government, we have not had a single successful prosecution of the forced marriage offences under the Criminal Code. Victims have limited civil protections and struggle to access Government-funded support.

A Shorten Labor Government is committed to stamping out forced marriage. Labor's policy is focused on preventing harm and abuse from occurring and supporting the vulnerable victims of this appalling practice.

FORCED MARRIAGE PROTECTION ORDERS

Labor will introduce Forced Marriage Protection Orders to provide civil protection against forced marriage for all victims – no matter their age.

Currently, there are no protection orders available for victims or persons at risk of forced marriage who are over the age of 18 years. When a victim or at-risk child turns 18, any pre-existing order is automatically lifted and ceases to protect them. Many victims of forced marriage are over the age of 18, and victims who are children are likely to continue to face threats into early adulthood.

A Shorten Labor Government will ensure that civil protections are available to help *all* persons at risk of forced marriage. Similar orders have been successfully introduced in the UK and give courts power to prohibit families from forcing their children to marry, prevent people at risk of forced marriage from being taken overseas against their will, and order that young people be allowed to continue with their education free from harm.

Although a Forced Marriage Protection Order will be a civil protection, breach of such an order will be a criminal offence.

\$2.25 MILLION FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

Labor will provide an additional \$2.25 million to civil society over four years to help stamp out this human rights abuse.

The Turnbull Government has failed to adequately resource the key organisations working on the ground to support victims. It has shortened funding for key advocacy organisations from four-year periods to yearly funding rounds, which has disrupted critical services.

Labor will provide \$1.8 million in additional funding over the forward estimates for organisations that work to detect and prevent forced marriage, human trafficking and slavery. Labor will also provide \$450,000 in additional funding for a grants program to provide discrete projects run by smaller organisations to address forced marriage.

IMPROVED SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS

Labor will provide \$8.7 million to expand access to Commonwealth support for victims of forced marriage and vulnerable people at risk of forced marriage.

Currently, victims who wish to access Government-funded support must agree to cooperate with law enforcement. This requirement means that children and young people affected by forced marriage are often put in a position where they must testify against their own family in order to access critical support. The Government has recently announced a limited trial to improve these support services, but it doesn't go nearly far enough.

A Shorten Labor Government will remove this requirement.

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Finally, a Shorten Labor Government will ensure we lead a coordinated national response to combatting the practice of forced marriage.

A Shorten Labor Government will establish a Forced Marriage Unit to provide:

- a one-stop shop to connect victims to support services and government agencies; and
- assistance for Australians who have been taken overseas to be married against their will.

A Shorten Labor Government will also work with state and territory governments to pursue:

- national mandatory reporting obligations for forced marriage; and
- nationally consistent forced marriage training for law enforcement.

Financial Implications (\$m)

Removal of the cooperation requirement

Issue/Measure	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Total
Total	0.0	-2.5	-2.9	-3.3	-8.7

*Impact on the underlying cash balance. A negative figure indicates spending, whereas a positive figure is a saving.

Funding for anti-slavery organisations

Issue/Measure	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Total
Total	0.0	-0.6	-0.6	-0.6	-1.8

*Impact on the underlying cash balance. A negative figure indicates spending, whereas a positive figure is a saving.

Grants program

Issue/Measure	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Total
Total	0.0	-0.15	-0.15	-0.15	-0.45

*Impact on the underlying cash balance. A negative figure indicates spending, whereas a positive figure is a saving.

Forced Marriage Unit

Issue/Measure	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	Total
Total	0.0	-0.9	-0.9	-0.9	-2.7

*Impact on the underlying cash balance. A negative figure indicates spending, whereas a positive figure is a saving.