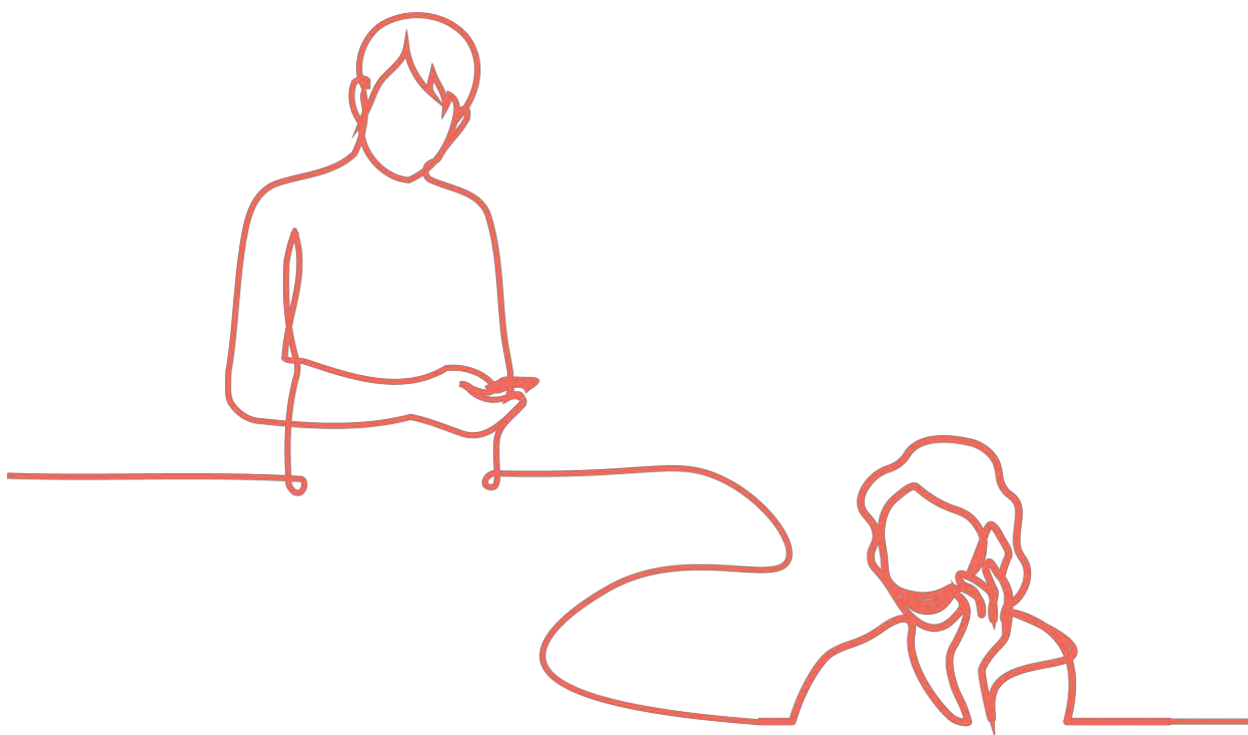


Recommendations for Helpline Design and Operation from People with Lived Experience of Modern Slavery



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FORWARD

We would firstly like to express our gratitude to – and acknowledge the bravery of - the people with lived experience of modern slavery who participated in this research project and trusted us to share their stories.

I would also like to acknowledge the dedication of our team members - Leanne Rhodes and Alexandra Doyle - who led the research and authored this report. I witnessed firsthand how much work is involved and how emotionally challenging projects of this nature can be.

As slavery numbers around the world worryingly continue to accelerate, the purpose of this research project was to gain insights into why more victims of modern slavery aren't reaching out for help, and what changes could be made to improve this situation.

The research participants were from Australia and New Zealand (ANZ). Accordingly, the sixteen recommendations should be viewed in an ANZ context. While some, or all, of the recommendations may be generic enough to be applicable in other countries, SlaveCheck recognises that each country will need to design its own helpline to accommodate issues including cultural differences, available resources, different approaches to law enforcement and crime prevention as well as geopolitical issues of their region.

We would strongly recommend that a similar research project to this would be a very constructive first step for any country committed to establishing a modern slavery helpline. SlaveCheck is available to assist you with this.

SlaveCheck's technologies were designed to lead, coordinate, and manage – at scale - the system-level changes necessary to systematically eliminate modern slavery. We maintain a sense of urgency to provide the tools and support to create new, effective, safe, and trusted pathways for victims around the world to engage and take control of their own journey out of slavery.

Our hope is that this report is a first step in achieving that reality.

Tim Murray
Founder & CEO
SlaveCheck



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We pay our respects to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across this country and to Elders, past and present. We acknowledge the impact of modern slavery practices and intergenerational trauma experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and walk alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and stand together in calls for systemic change.

We acknowledge that modern slavery is a global issue impacting an estimated 50 million people today.¹ It is a complex problem involving the response of many hard-working governments, organisations, and individuals. We acknowledge the dedication and efforts of the Department of Social Services, the Attorney General's Department, Australian Federal Police, Anti-Slavery Australia, the Red Cross with the Support for Trafficked People Program, the Salvation Army for the Lived Experience Engagement Program (LEEP) including the inaugural Survivor Advisory Council in Australia. And in New Zealand Employment New Zealand, Manaaki Tangata Victim Support, the New Zealand government with their all government approach, other dedicated service providers, NGOs, and survivor networks in their work to provide support to people with lived experience of modern slavery.

We want to thank the Australian/New Zealand survivor network Wahine Toa Rising for their help with this study.

We acknowledge the bravery and express our thanks to those with lived experience of modern slavery that have participated in this research and have trusted us and shared their stories. Our hope is that this report improves access to help for others.

DEFINITIONS

- A 'research participant' refers to the individuals interviewed in this research study.
- A 'victim' is someone experiencing modern slavery.
- A 'survivor' or 'person with lived experience' (preferred reference) is someone who has removed themselves from their perpetrator. Both terms were used interchangeably by the research participants.
- 'First responders' are any staff that make first contact when a person in a situation of modern slavery reaches out for help, including police.
- 'Frontline workers' are people working in professions that have one to one contact with potential victims (e.g. Doctors, counsellors, educators, financial advisors)
- 'Helpline' refers to modern slavery specific helplines.
- 'Portal' refers to online access to connect to a modern slavery helpline.

Thanks to:



¹ Walk Free, *Global Slavery Index 2023*, The Minderoo Foundation, Available from: <https://www.walkfree.org> [24 Jan 2024]



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report establishes the need for a dedicated modern slavery helpline that addresses all forms of slavery and then defines what design and operation elements are important to people with lived experience of modern slavery from across Australian and New Zealand.

Throughout this consultation, research participants expressed ongoing fears and a journey of trust in getting help. People with lived experience of modern slavery are often unsure if they meet the criteria of modern slavery, wondering if they will be believed and wary if they will get the help they need. A dedicated well-resourced helpline for people in modern slavery involving people with lived experience would reduce these concerns.

92% of research participants reported the fear of being caught whilst reaching out for help and the punishment that would follow from their perpetrator was used as a deterrent. It therefore took a lot of trust to risk reaching out again when, in some cases, their life was at stake. This meant that having choice about how their case proceeded was critical so they could navigate these ongoing risks with their perpetrator.

This journey of trust when reaching out for help, was built over numerous points of contact before acting on the support they needed to get to safety, hence the importance of remaining in control of their own process. This gave them time to gain confidence and think through their next steps. Research participants saw their interactions with support services as a dialogue that would happen over several contacts, often accessing via different technologies to reduce their risk of exposure.

It was also apparent that people with lived experience had high trust of other survivors, with 58% of research participants recommending that a survivor be the best person to answer a helpline. Survivor networks or other survivors were viewed as people who understand their circumstance and often gave the best advice in helping them navigate services to get the help they need.

A national helpline in Australia and New Zealand should be established, staffed, and trained by people with lived experience of modern slavery. The training would focus on building a journey of trust between the caller and the helpline staff whilst callers establish their plan for how they want to be helped.

Existing helplines, such as those that support victims of crime, should receive the same training to provide a consistency in care.

WHERE TO FROM HERE:

In addition to the establishment of dedicated modern slavery helplines/portals at national levels in Australia and New Zealand, there is a need for helplines to be established in other countries of the world. Modern slavery and human trafficking are crimes that often happen across borders requiring a connected response.

SlaveCheck plans to establish a global network of victim voice helplines/portals through:

- Running research like this report in other countries with both people with lived experience and local experts.
- Assisting national governments with the technology needed to run a helpline/portal in their context.
- Providing interconnectivity between countries to allow better investigation and a better remedy for people with lived experience.
- Building up data of current reporting of modern slavery that can be accessed in real time to understand modern slavery patterns.
- Using collective intelligence to find solutions to modern slavery when it is evidenced.

All of this works together in our goal to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8.7 to 'take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking' on a global scale.

58%

of research participants recommended that a survivor is the best person to answer a call.



LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1 The Australian and New Zealand governments create and operate a dedicated national modern slavery helpline that addresses all forms of modern slavery as a matter of priority.
- 2 Australian and New Zealand governments to standardise indicators for modern slavery across service providers.
- 3 Training on modern slavery including its indicators and how to access the helpline must be widely circulated amongst but not limited to other helplines, medical practitioners, police, counsellors, educators, legal aid, financial counsellors, nail salons and hairdressers in migrant communities.
- 4 A national helpline should use a phone number with a memorable word/phrase in it. E.g. 1800 GET OUT.
- 5 A helpline must do more than respond to emergency situations. It must also provide access to accurate information about what is modern slavery, referral to eligible services and a space to plan an exit from modern slavery situations.
- 6 First responders (including police) must be trained in trauma informed care and use a non-authoritative, caring tone of voice and communication.
- 7 Callers must be given the choice to access a real person via the helpline.
- 8 Access to the helpline should be available 24/7 and via both technical and non-technical formats (phone, web, chat bot, text) including providing access to real people.
- 9 Any access to the national helpline should be secure and not leave a trace on the caller's device. A quick exit button should be always available.
- 10 Case information gathered should be securely stored with the option of forwarding along with any referrals to service providers to save the caller from having to repeat information.
- 11 Helplines must provide a way for callers to securely access details of prior calls without having to keep any records on their own devices.
- 12 Helplines must allow the caller to be in control of their response and give space for planning their exit from situations of modern slavery.
- 13 Police should only be involved in the response with the caller's permission.
- 14 People with lived experience from various types of modern slavery should be engaged as first responders on helplines.
- 15 People with lived experience working as first responders must be provided with professional trauma informed and other trainings as along with regular professional debriefing sessions.
- 16 Victim-survivors who have been assessed and validated through the helplines could be referred to a password protected survivor network portal to help their ongoing recovery and connect survivors with a range of services.



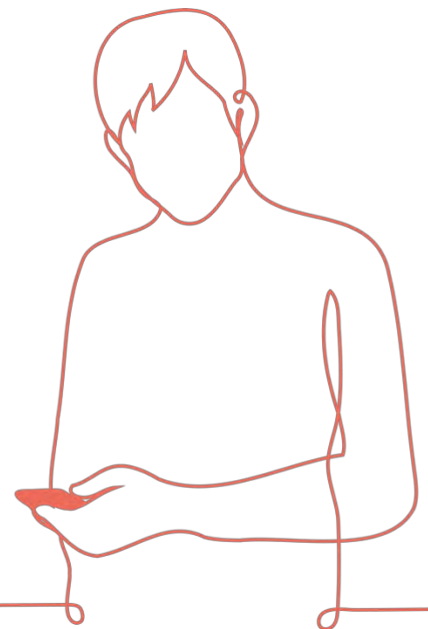
INTRODUCTION

Modern Slavery is a pervasive global issue with profound implications for individuals and societies. For the estimated 50 million people² impacted by this crime, finding help to exit and rebuild their lives is an area where people fall through systemic gaps and are unable to access help and vital services. Dedicated modern slavery helplines are being developed around the world to provide a gateway for help and access to services to survivors as well as identifying and exposing perpetrators.

The term ‘human trafficking’ was first defined by the Palermo Protocol³ on 15 Nov 2000 with the term ‘modern slavery’⁴ to be later adopted. The United Kingdom were the first to define the term ‘modern slavery’ in 2015. Despite slavery being part of the world for centuries, a recognised international anti-slavery sector has only been in existence for 24 years. There is still much work to be done as governments develop and implement national strategies and build their effectiveness and connectedness.

People with lived experience of modern slavery know intimately the details of this crime and the struggle for help. Their advice should be sought when it comes to the design and operation of helplines that work to help people that have been through these traumatic experiences.

“They know how trafficking happens, and what it can do to an individual’s sense of safety, economic security, health, and relationships. They know what trafficking can do to entire families or communities.” – Chris Ash & Sophie Otiende⁵



² Walk Free, *Global Slavery Index 2023*, The Minderoo Foundation, Available from: <https://www.walkfree.org> [24 Jan 2024]

³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Palermo Protocol*, 15 Nov 2000, Available from: https://www.unodc.org/res/human-trafficking/2021the-protocol-tip_html/TIP.pdf [24 Jan 2024]

⁴ The term modern slavery is defined in Divisions 270 and 271 of the Australian *Criminal Code Act 1995*

⁵ Ash C. & Otiende S., *Meaningful Engagement of People with Lived Experience*, Global Fund to End Modern Slavery, p. 30, Available from: <https://gfems.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Meaningful-Engagement-of-People-with-Lived-Experience.pdf> [24 Jan 2024]



THE CURRENT SITUATION OF MODERN SLAVERY HELPLINES

At the time of writing this report (Feb 2024), there is no dedicated national Australian or New Zealander modern slavery Helpline.

People experiencing modern slavery in Australia can report through the Australian Federal Police, in an emergency can contact the police, receive legal advice from Anti-slavery Australia or get advice and communication materials from the Red Cross including the Support for Trafficked People Program and Work Right Hub. Various other civil society organisations offer support via direct contact, chat boxes and their websites. From 28 May 2024 an additional referral pathway⁶ will be offered to access the Support for Trafficked People Program that does not require reporting to the police. The NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner has plans to establish a hotline arrangement to provide advice and assistance to people at risk of modern slavery as required by section 12(d) of the Modern Slavery Act 2018 (NSW)⁷ as part of their 2023-2026 Strategic Plan⁸.

New Zealand does not currently have a dedicated helpline⁹ for all aspects of modern slavery. Employment New Zealand operate a helpline and associated website for reporting migrant exploitation¹⁰. The 24/7 Manaaki Tāngata / Victim Support line guided by the Victims Code of Rights is available for general support.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH

The purpose of this research is to understand the need and provide recommendations for the design and operation of a national modern slavery helpline in Australia and New Zealand from the perspective of people with lived experience in modern slavery. Throughout the research we explore:

- What are the barriers to using helplines?
- How should people find out about helplines?
- What are the technical requirements for a helpline?
- Who should operate a helpline?
- What services should helplines offer?

The research is limited to participants from Australia and New Zealand. Further studies are intended for other parts of the world.

⁶ Attorney-General's Department, *Boosting support for victim-survivors of human trafficking*, Australian Government. Available from <https://ministers.ag.gov.au/media-centre/boosting-support-victim-survivors-human-trafficking-16-05-202324> [24 Jan 2024]

⁷ NSW Legislation, *Modern Slavery Act 2018 No 30*, NSW Government. Available from <https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-2018-030#:~:text=An%20Act%20to%20make%20provision,Commissioner%3B%20and%20for%20other%20purposes.&text=This%20Act%20is%20the%20Modern%20Slavery%20Act%202018.&text=This%20Act%20commences%20on%201%20January%202022.> [24 Jan 2024]

⁸ Office of the NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner, *Working together for real freedom: NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner's Strategic Plan 2023-2026*, Australian Government. Available from <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/documents/legal-and-justice/anti-slavery-commissioner/plans-and-discussion-papers/working-together-for-real-freedom-nsw-anti-slavery-commissioners-strategic-plan-2023-2026.pdf>. [24 Jan 2024]

⁹ Walk Free, *Global Slavery Index 2023*, Available from <https://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/country-studies/new-zealand/> [24 Jan 2024]

¹⁰ Employment New Zealand – Reporting Migrant Exploitation, <https://reportmigrantexploitation.employment.govt.nz> [24 Jan 2024]



METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study is to explore the lived experiences of individuals who have been in situations of modern slavery, with a focus on understanding the nature of their exploitation, coping mechanisms, and factors influencing recovery. This led to the following research questions centred around their experience in reaching out for help and what role a national modern slavery helpline could play. What are the barriers for people experiencing modern slavery to reach out for help? What were their expectations of the first responder when they did reach out for help? How could a helpline operate so that it builds trust? What role could survivors play in the operation of a helpline? What services should be provided through a helpline?

Qualitative research was done through a series of written online interview questions in two phases in December 2023. This involved twelve research participants, currently living in Australia or New Zealand, who were approached through existing survivor networks with lived experience of human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, sexual servitude, or child marriage. They were paid in vouchers for their time. Two research participants experienced slavery in another country, but all research participants had experience of services to support their recovery in Australia and New Zealand.

This study, is guided by resilience theory, human rights, and trauma-informed frameworks, emphasizing the importance of understanding the socio-cultural and psychological dimensions of modern slavery.

Ethical considerations of informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality were central to this work. All research participants were provided with a detailed outline of the purpose of the study, the intention of the report's usage, access to the report before it was published and a full understanding of the voluntary basis under which this work was conducted, including their ability to withdraw their consent at any time. Pseudonyms were assigned to research participants, and all identifiable information was removed. The data was securely stored with restricted access limited to the research team.

Transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis and a coding system to identify recurring patterns, themes, and categories related to the experiences of modern slavery, coping, and recovery. The findings from their responses provided insights into understanding how reaching out for help was a journey of trust from before they got help, their expectations when they did get help and the role of other survivors in their recovery.

This research was funded by SlaveCheck.



OVERVIEW: RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

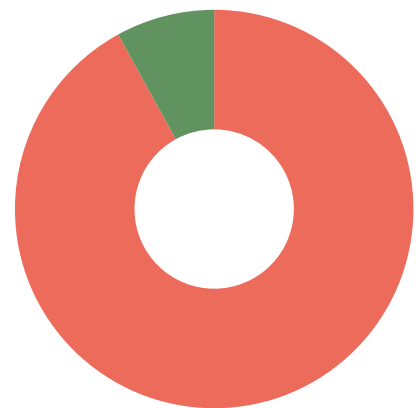
A consistent theme emerged throughout the consultation, whereby research participants expressed ongoing fears and a **journey of trust**. People experiencing modern slavery are often unsure if they meet the criteria of modern slavery, wondering if they will be believed and are wary if they will get the help they need. This gave rise to the recommendation #1 for the establishment of a national helpline.

“A helpline is so much more than a helpline, it is the first point of a call for a person who is terrified of what is happening to them and is desperate to get help.” – Becca, Australia

92% of the research participants reported the fear of being caught whilst reaching out for help and the punishment that would follow from their perpetrator was used as a deterrent. This meant that feeling in control and having choice about how their case proceeded was critical when they did finally reach out for help so they could best navigate these risks with their perpetrator.

“There is ...a sense of fear that if one DOES seek support - will they be believed? Will their request for confidentiality, anonymity be respected? Will they be protected? etc. There is always a fear of retribution - whether real or unreal.” – Michael, New Zealand

What follows is a more detailed look at the journey people with lived experience went on before reaching out for help; reaching out for help and their expectations of the first responders; the role of survivors as first responders and involving survivor networks in recovery..



92%

of research participants reported fear of being caught whilst reaching out for help and the punishment that would follow from their perpetrator was used as a deterrent.



PART A- BEFORE REACHING OUT FOR HELP

Research participants shared their experiences before accessing help that impacted their trust levels.

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS HAPPENING TO ME- IDENTIFYING MODERN SLAVERY

Determining **what is modern slavery** can be subjective and often the person experiencing it is so traumatised they do not tell their full story or pretend they are ok because they are scared and in denial. People experiencing modern slavery often don't have the **language** or **understanding** to self-identify they are in a slavery situation.

"There are people like me who did not even know what to 'label' what was happening to us at that time." – Michael, New Zealand

"Initially, as a child, I did not understand that my situation was wrong. I thought that it was a normal life condition and I had to do whatever I was told. I am a survivor of child marriage and forced labour." – Tina, New Zealand

"Each person is individual and may not exhibit the same signs as someone else. So, no matter where I was and no matter what story I told, nobody gave me language to describe what was happening to me." – Amy, Australia

"I didn't know about grooming. I didn't understand coercive control. I didn't know what the right words to describe modern slavery were. I didn't understand that if someone trapped you in a situation by force, deception, or coercion for personal or financial gain it was exploitation. I didn't know that the buyout fee I was supposed to pay wasn't real." – Jenny, Australia

"You might think it should be obvious to someone that they are being abused but in fact it's often so slowly and subtly escalated and intermingled with apologies and promises that sometimes you end up so confused you're not even sure what's really going on. You doubt yourself and are conditioned not to complain." – Rose, Australia



The **language** used to uncover a slavery situation is critical as it presents in various forms and refers to a range of exploitative practices. Language should focus on the use of coercion, threats, or deception by offenders to exploit an individual and undermine their freedom. The term 'modern slavery' can be meaningless to an individual as they come to terms with their own situation.

"I wouldn't reach out to a Modern Slavery / Exploitation hotline unless I knew that's what I am experiencing." – Mary, Australia

"If someone had asked me if I was being trafficked or was in modern slavery I would have said no because I didn't know what those words really meant. If they had asked me if I was tricked about the work situation I was in and felt like I was trapped and couldn't leave I would have said yes to those things. I first reached out for help because I couldn't pay the 'buyout fee' to leave so that would have been an indicator too." – Jenny, Australia

BARRIERS TO ASKING FOR HELP- FEAR OF NOT BEING BELIEVED, FEAR OF THEIR PERPETRATOR.

Migrants are high risk for being coerced into slavery situations due to precarious visa status, debts, limited language skills and their dependency on others for support. Often there is **no one trusted** in their world. They are **dependent** on their perpetrators as it is all they know. People experiencing modern slavery live in perpetual fear of ongoing violence, not being believed and visa status issues.

"You are scared, anxious, distressed, or nervous about the bad situation you are in.... You are told you will be reported to border control or that your family or loved ones are at risk if you tell anyone about the situation." – Mary, Australia

"Trapped in the visa system - I was trafficked on a student visa, as a foreigner there are no pathways to transit to any other visa, being forced to remain in the exploitative situation to meet visa requirements and stay in the country." - Jo, Australia

Deciding to access support may be discouraged due to the **fear of being misunderstood** which is heightened with language barriers. Victims may be **traumatised** which limits their ability to make decisions and accept their situation due to a range of mental health issues.

"It's tough feeling regularly 'unseen.' It's an exhausting and lonely process. I'm so tired, I can feel it in my soul." – Max, New Zealand



THE STRUGGLES WITH FINDING HELP – THE DISAPPOINTMENT OF NOT BEING IDENTIFIED

Modern slavery is not widely understood or widely recognised within the community. Therefore, it is often not recognised by the people experiencing it. This results in people looking for help in other places and often being unable to articulate their circumstance due to their trauma.

“I think I would have gotten help earlier if I had known more about what I experienced.” – Max, New Zealand

As a result of this, it is highly likely that people reaching out for help who are experiencing modern slavery will come with the disappointment and even additional trauma from prior failed attempts. This certainly impacts their trauma and level of trust.

“As a victim, you may approach helplines/portals with suspicion and hypervigilance because of your experiences.” – Max, New Zealand

“I always feel a tremendous amount of pain when I think about my struggles trying to get help.” – Jenny, Australia

RECOMMENDATION # 1

The Australian and New Zealand governments create and operate a dedicated national modern slavery helpline that addresses all forms of modern slavery as a matter of priority.

Research participants expressed how damaging inconsistency across services in the identification of modern slavery could be. For example, 25% of research participants were unable to access services, some because they were not from overseas, and others because they were from overseas. 58% of the research participants said when they initially asked for help in various locations such as other helplines, police, and medical services they were not identified as being in a slavery situation.

“I have reported to police many times, have been delivered to hospital or accessed mental health services. Never once was I told I was experiencing violence or exploitation.” – Mary, Australia

“For the most part I think that current services are overwhelmed and not inclusive. There weren’t any beds available for me when I wanted to leave, I had to wait a few weeks. Not only that, but many places won’t accept male children or pets for example. People with disabilities, mental health issues and marginalised groups such as POC, trans and LGBTQIA+ community members often fall between the cracks.” – Rose, Australia

“I never got any help from the existing channels I reached out to. Police dismissed me, it brings shame on someone and further pushes the survivors into exploitation as they will be scared to make another attempt.” – Jo, Australia

“As I previously mentioned, the worst part about helplines and portals and my experience with them is that they were non-existent. I was not aware at all that there was any help available and accessible for me. This made me feel alone and helpless. I turned to denial and repression of everything I went through which not only harmed me at that time, but eventually caused me a lot of trauma and suffering later on.” – Michael, New Zealand

RECOMMENDATION #2

Australian and New Zealand governments to standardise indicators for modern slavery across service providers.

58%

of research participants were **not identified** as being in a slavery situation when initially reaching out for help in various locations such as other helplines, police and medical



TRIGGERS FOR CHANGE

Once the **person experiencing modern slavery understands and accepts** they are in a bad situation, that can be the turning point for change.

“What triggered me personally to get help was realising that I didn’t want to live a life governed by my trauma and my triggers, I was ready to find who I was without those.” – Amy, Australia

The broader community can play an important role in identifying trafficking or slavery situations. People experiencing modern slavery often don’t have **access** to a phone or internet without being watched so they reach out to **friends** in their network or **frontline health workers** initially.

“For the most part, survivors are going to friends to relay their experiences and seek help (if at all).” – Michelle, New Zealand

“I first reached out to my GP to get help and was referred to an in-house psychologist and then a psychiatrist.” – Max, New Zealand

“The only reason I was ever able to get away was because a financial counsellor noticed the signs of abuse and seized an opportunity to get me alone and organise a bed for me at a refuge. She saved my life.” – Rose, Australia

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

Research participants identified various signs that could identify a person is experiencing modern slavery or trafficking.

“Some signs of modern slavery can be restricted freedom, coercion, debt bondage, and degrading living conditions. People may show physical or psychological abuse, fearfulness, and signs of reclusion. Unusual work hours, lack of personal belongings, and an inability to communicate freely may also indicate possible exploitation. Changes in personality traits and an unwillingness to discuss work or life circumstances.” – Michelle, New Zealand

“As an adult woman, clear signs would be isolation. I was always isolated, hidden away from the public eye unless I was being escorted to a buyer, residence, hotel, bar, even to the toilet.” – Becca, Australia

“...signs of rapid aging and neglect ... This could be weight loss, appetite loss, loss of a desire to socialise, poor dental health, due to a need to constantly supervise a volatile and unpredictable person. A short fuse, poor memory and a lack of energy...” – Lisa, Australia

“A person who is afraid of others and tries to keep to themselves for fear of retaliation from abuser. A young (especially if underage) girl/woman is married to an older man is ALWAYS a red flag. Someone who appears overworked. Children who are being “neglected” by a parent ...” – Tina, New Zealand



TARGETED COMMUNICATION MATERIALS

Posters and brochures need to be culturally sensitive and translated into different **languages** to improve their reach and understanding to assist frontline workers and people experiencing situations of trafficking and slavery to help identify it.

Communication materials need to be distributed in discreet places where the perpetrators will not go, such as public bathroom cubicles, at medical services or on university campuses.

“Now it is important to note that security or handlers will never take girls into a shop if there are brochures openly out or signs on a wall. These would have to be in toilet cubicles, (they go in the bathrooms, just not in the cubicle or they stand at the door).” – Becca, Australia

“Medical services have been shown to be a good opportunity to identify victims and provide possible interventions.” – Tina, New Zealand

“Universities should insist on mental health well-being and encourage students to speak to the university counsellor should they feel distressed about anything – I got help through a university counsellor when I explained to her my situation and I was not reporting, I was genuinely distressed and just looking for a coping strategy, but she was able to identify I was in a trafficking situation. So also, more training for frontline workers so they are able to identify the signs when victims come out because most of them do not know anything about these crimes.” – Jo, Australia

“I would also recommend choosing a phone line number that matches a word (e.g. 1300 GET OUT) that would allow victims to easily remember it without having to write it down or keep a record of it somewhere that could be found and result in punishment or even death in extreme cases.” – Rose, Australia

RECOMMENDATION #3

Training on modern slavery including its indicators and how to access the helpline must be widely circulated amongst but not limited to other helplines, medical practitioners, police, counsellors, educators, legal aid, financial counsellors, nail salons and hairdressers in migrant communities.

RECOMMENDATION #4

A national helpline should use a phone number with a memorable word/phrase in it. E.g. 1800 GET OUT.



PART B- REACHING OUT FOR HELP AND EXPECTATIONS OF A HELPLINE

Once a person experiencing modern slavery has braved the 'journey of trust' to finally make contact, it is important to continue to build trust to ensure they stay connected. This section details what people with lived experience of modern slavery would expect of a helpline should one exist.

EARLY CONTACT

This journey of trust was built over numerous points of contact when first getting help. Research participants described how their early interactions reaching out for help was a gradual dialogue, often using different technologies that would help build their trust over time. This gave them time to gain confidence and think through their next steps.

"The process that should be followed. I think again it needs to be led by the caller. What help do they want right now? They might just be calling to make plans to leave in the future. Where are they located? Can you connect them with services near them? It's important to be transparent about what you can offer, and to go slowly with them, don't push them to make decisions, it took me 8 tries to escape so be prepared for callers to need to call multiple times before they are ready to take action." – Rose, Australia



WHY CALL A HELPLINE?

Helplines are often understood to be for emergencies, but research participants said they would call a helpline for several reasons:

To get information: Some callers are likely to check out a website before they call in search of information. This may then lead to a call. Information requested included definitions of modern slavery to determine if the concerns they had about their lives were recognisable as a condition where they could get help, to understand their rights, to discern whether they met criteria for accessing other services, how to recognise dangerous situations and what ongoing services might be available to them.

“I would prefer to use a chat bot initially to assess my help options and then be given the option of a follow-up call. It can be daunting to call without first understanding if it's worthwhile to invest energy in the process.” – Max, New Zealand

To talk: The ability to talk was often a pathway to understanding their situation as well as to determine if the helpline can be trusted. Sometimes callers will just want to talk, other times they will want to get advice around safety or understand what their rights are.

“I didn't need them to do anything as such, I just needed to feel like it was ok to ask questions and to try and understand what was happening to me and where or how to get help myself.” – Jenny, Australia

“If you want to actually help people it shouldn't just be for situations you deem as ‘emergencies’.” – Rachel, Australia

To access services: Research participants wanted help to know which services are available to them, do they meet the intake criteria and if so, to provide a referral. A helpline case worker must be clear about what can and cannot be offered. Suggested services include referrals, housing, education and bridging courses for those with qualifications from overseas, visa assistance, mental health, trauma informed counselling, food, clothing, medical, dental, branding scars/tattoo removal, transport, cab charge, employment assistance, community connection, finance, child support, legal support, immigration support, opening bank accounts, spiritual support, case management, connection to other survivors and survivor networks, crisis funds and ongoing monetary support.

“We need help accessing food; housing; mental health & trauma support; physical health support; dental health support; physical health support; help with transport to access the above; money to pay for all the above; non-exploitative employment; community interactions; case management support; financial literacy; healthy relationship education; literacy of daily interactions; literacy on recognising dangerous situations; child support; legal supports etc.” – Mary, Australia

“In order to create a good helpline/portal you NEED to be clear and concise on what you can and can't provide to them as soon as they get in contact with you. When someone is in crisis and truly needs help, reaching out is more challenging than you'd think without having to call several different places/organizations to find out if the help that they are looking for and need is something you can even assist with.” – Rachel, Australia



To plan to exit a situation/emergency help:

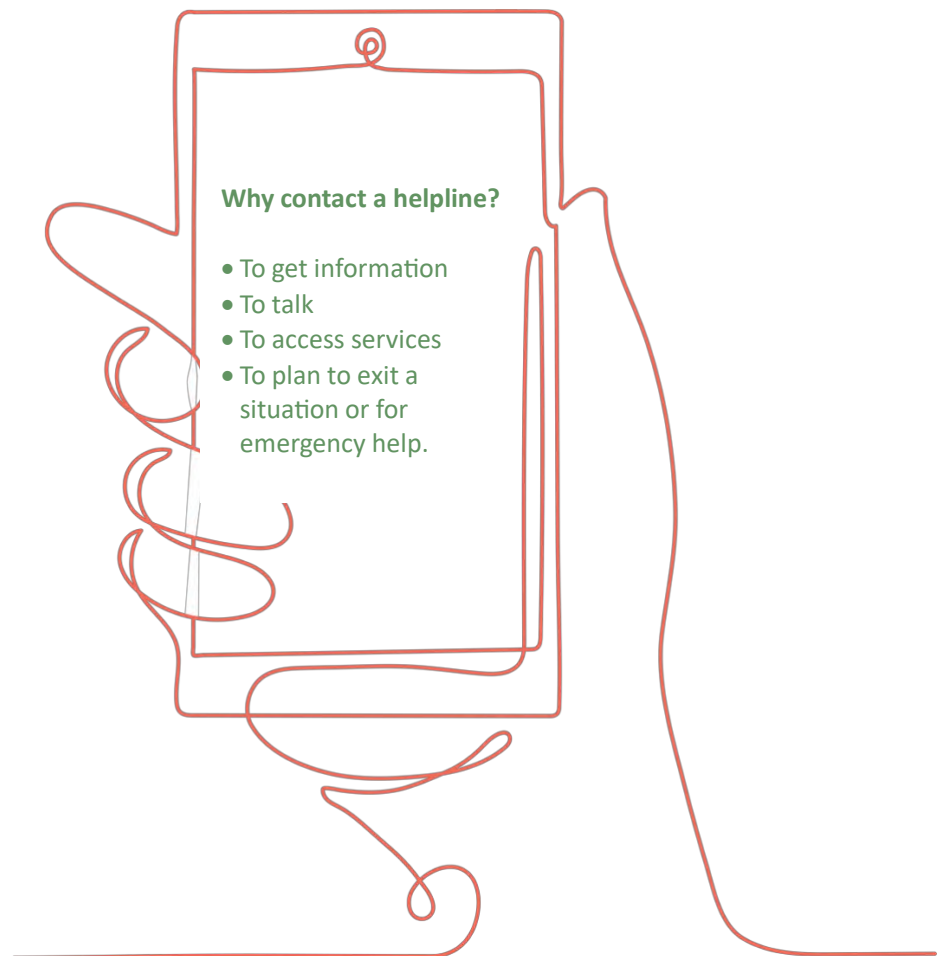
Research participants wanted those still in a modern slavery situation to have the ability to talk through and formulate an exit plan on their own terms. Research participants stressed that callers know the nuances of their situation best and need to remain in control. They did not want the helpline to override their decision to act except in the situation where their life was under immediate threat or children were in danger. It was especially important that police only be involved at the caller's choice.

"In situations of ongoing modern slavery or trafficking where there are safety risks, but the person is not at immediate risk of losing their life, the situation needs to be handled tactfully." – Max, Australia

"Any police involvement should be up to the person contacting the helpline. If people feel that this choice will be taken away from them or enforced, they may well be less likely to reach out for help. Police involvement has the potential to cause serious consequences for some survivors depending on their circumstance and should only be done with the persons clear consent and in a way that will be safe for the survivor. Survivors should always be given a choice on this matter unless there is an immediate threat of life or danger to a child." – Michelle, Australia

RECOMMENDATION #5

A helpline must do more than respond to emergency situations. It must also provide access to accurate information about what is modern slavery, referral to eligible services and a space to plan an exit from modern slavery situations.



THE IMPORTANCE OF TALKING TO A HUMAN

Some research participants were happy to navigate their options with a chat bot, phone menu or website to find simple information, but when it came to an emergency or accessing services, they wanted to speak to a real human. This could be via webchat, text messaging, emailing or phone call. It was about having a choice of options.

When it came to interacting with a real human, research participants requested that these first responders be:

- trained in trauma informed care (75% of research participants)
- a person with lived experience (with a variety of experiences staffed at any time to match different situations (58% of research participants)
- not be a member of the police force (100% of research participants requested this, with the only exceptions being if a child was in danger or if the person was in imminent danger)
- understands modern slavery criteria
- understands the selection criteria for referral services and can clearly state what they can and cannot provide
- screened through reference checks, Working with Children Checks and Police Checks.

“Also if at all possible the call should always be picked up by a human. Someone with a kind and caring voice.” – Rose, Australia

The importance of the role of the first responders cannot be underestimated. **A gentle, caring tone** of voice that listens and does not ask too many questions beyond ‘how can I help’, ‘what do you need right now’ is the first thing the caller responds to. 58% of research participants said tone and a non-authoritative voice was important to them.

“Personally, I would find a calm maternal voice on the other line reassuring.” – Michael, New Zealand

“It is no good having a person of authority no matter how well trained they are on the other end, because tone of voice is imperative. Victim’s senses are heightened already, someone on the other end of a phone or a computer, must be able to instantly help the victim to feel safe, heard, seen and valued. This is just too important and will be the difference to victims getting in contact or not.” – Michelle, New Zealand

First responders also need to be able to understand the story behind what is being said, even where inconsistencies arise.

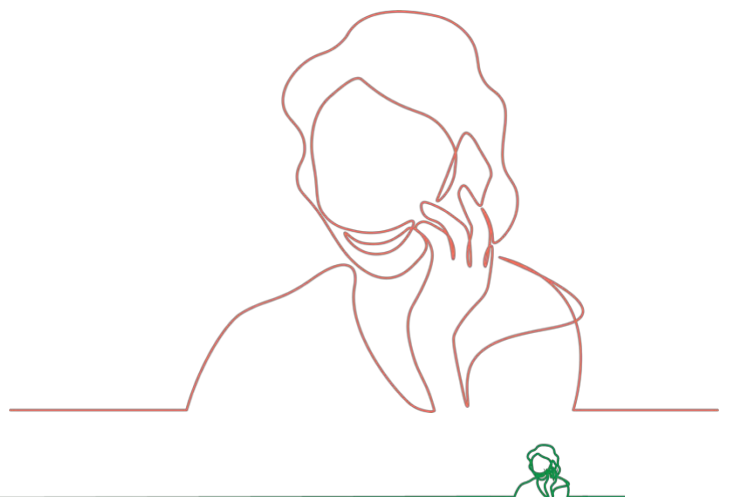
“Often, the survivor may not have perfect English, and may tell stories in a way that is not linear or well told for a lay audience. Trauma is debilitating, and with long-term fatigue, the listener will need to be patient. It may not be their job to be compassionate, but it is important that imperfections in survivors’ stories are not a barrier to receiving help.” – Lisa, Australia

RECOMMENDATION #6

First responders (including police) must be trained in trauma informed care and use a non-authoritative, caring tone of voice and communication.

RECOMMENDATION #7

Callers must be able to access a real person via the helpline.



METHODS FOR CONNECTING

Research participants were varied in the way they wanted to contact a helpline. Responses included: text messaging, phone calls, online forms, QR codes, email, automated chat-bots, and chat boxes and the ability to interchange the way they accessed as their case continued. They expected that the helpline would be available 24/7.

“The helpline should be available 24hrs, callers may only have a few mins to get through before being discovered and its imperative that their call can be picked up at any time.” – Rose, Australia

The chosen method of contact was largely influenced by the kind of control perpetrators had including no access or monitored access to internet or phones. Security was an important factor, with research participants recommending each interaction has a quick exit way out that simply involves pressing a button and clearing a screen in the event they are interrupted by a perpetrator. There should be no trace of phone calls left on phones and laptops after visiting websites or making calls. Everything must be encrypted or deleted at the caller's end immediately.

“...messages must be either encrypted or deleted on their end immediately. There can be no evidence that a victim has sought help, for fear their safety would be compromised.” – Becca, Australia

Some research participants expressed that they were not tech-savvy and therefore non-technical options needed to be available. Multi-lingual options and interpretation were also needed.

“I would appreciate a website with a simple and non-overwhelming interface. Simple instructions, buttons that are easy to identify, and a process of reporting that is uncomplicated and will automatically lead you to the next step without having to make you go back to square one and figure out the process all over again.” – Michael, New Zealand

“As a person whose first language is not English, I can imagine how some people might find having to articulate their experiences and stories very intimidating. Deciding to access support might be discouraged outright by the fear of being misunderstood or not understood at all.” – Michael, New Zealand

“I think that there is also a need to consider that some communities may not get along with each other, for example, Chinese and Taiwanese. Both communities may speak Mandarin but there is an active political conflict that is ongoing.” – Lisa, Australia

“Having a chatbot on the website sounds like a good idea to me if it is monitored in real time, so someone can get help WHEN THEY NEED IT. This is so important as windows of opportunity are often small and few and far between. Also the conversation will disappear when the window is closed so there is no record for the abuser to find.” – Rose, Australia

RECOMMENDATION #8

Access to the helpline should be available 24/7 and via both technical and non-technical formats (phone, web, chat bot, text) including providing access to real people.

RECOMMENDATION #9

Any access to the helpline should be secure and not leave a trace on the caller's device. A quick exit button should be always available.



MAKING AND REMAKING CONTACT

When it comes to making and remaking contact, research participants were highly concerned that they be in control of how this happens, especially if they are still in a situation with a perpetrator. Suggestions for ways to follow up and make contact included:

- Working out a plan together with the first responder
- Making appointments via an online booking system
- Text or email first before making a call (this would need to be agreed upon first in case it puts the caller in danger)
- Quoting a reference number

“An online booking system to make an appointment for a chat or talk a little bit in the future would be a good idea as well, since some people who could be contacting you might still be in an ongoing modern slavery/human trafficking situation.” – Rachel, Australia

Aside from being able to have a way to remake contact, it was also highly important to research participants that any follow up that was promised or implied was carried out. Again, this impacts a caller’s trust and levels of further trauma with the helpline. Research participants had no issue with the helpline not being able to provide a service so long as it was clear it would not be provided. Unclear responses can lead to a caller waiting in hope when they could be making other plans.

“However, there are not enough resources, or they don't have the proper etiquette in communication to explain, or even say a word on whether they are going to help or not. I felt like I entrusted so much to them, only to be revictimized again and treated disrespectfully by failing to follow up. I heard from other victims that the silent treatment is a recurrent issue. If they can't help for XYZ reason, it is important to communicate that clearly so that victims are not waiting on that and can brainstorm other plans of action.” – Tina, New Zealand

Research participants would like the ability to **continue the conversation with the same person over time**, and when this is not possible, for **notes to be taken and stored securely so they don't have to repeat the details of their situation**. Having to retell their story repeatedly across services was incredibly frustrating and traumatising. It would be helpful for callers to have the option of having their records sent through when the helpline is referring the caller to another service.

“Sometimes just the idea of filling out ANOTHER 38-page form with the same information you put on the last 5 forms you filled out is just too much. Simple tasks become so difficult and then you hate yourself for not doing it.” – Rose, Australia

“It would be useful for the hotline to keep a record that can be kept confidential if the victim chooses, but with the option to later be provided to police as evidence if needed. The recurrent problem that law enforcement uses against victims is asking: “why didn't you say anything before?” “Why did it take you so long” – Tina, New Zealand

RECOMMENDATION #10

Case information gathered should be securely stored with the option of forwarding along with any referrals to service providers to save the caller from having to repeat information.

RECOMMENDATION #11

Helplines must provide a way for callers to securely access details of prior calls without having to keep any records on their own devices.



IT'S MY CHOICE!

Helplines must recognise a caller's own agency in planning how they get help. Helplines must recognise that perpetrators often take away the ability to choose. When first responders do this, it can be triggering and cause the caller to mistrust the helpline.

"we don't need strict or hard people telling us to get out now over the phone, we're trying to get away from people who are ordering us around like that." – Rose, Australia

"We need help, but also self determination and agency." – Mary, Australia

To help the caller feel **safe**, they must be given full control over their case and guaranteed police will not be involved unless requested. The first responders, police and other front-line staff must be **trauma informed** with a clear explanation of what is the process of support being offered.

"Any police involvement should be up to the person contacting the helpline". - Michelle, New Zealand

"I believe each individual should have the option to be able to speak to police if they choose to do so, I also believe it is really important to provide support through that process as it can be a very confronting and scary experience." – Amy, Australia

"A victim-centered approach rather than judged from a criminality angle." – Jo, Australia

"It is vital that these helplines are not only confidential but that survivors are guaranteed that there will be no repercussions once they have contacted them, as some survivors have legal concerns around age, migrant status, religion etc." - Michelle, New Zealand

"State and Federal police are often the assumed bodies to report to or to go to for help. Although this can often be problematic as both departments (primarily the state police) can be ill-equipped to deal with such matters and have little knowledge on the process and have little training on a trauma informed approach. The horrendous stories from survivors regarding their experiences in reporting to state police is concerning and may hinder future survivors reporting their experiences." – Michelle, Australia

25% of research participants expressed that the only exception to police being called without the permission of the caller is when someone's life or children are in danger. However, this is a highly contentious issue amongst people with lived experience and should only be enacted when there is no other option.

"I don't think police should be involved unless a child is at risk of being harmed." – Jo, Australia

RECOMMENDATION #12

Helplines must allow the caller to be in control of their response and give space for planning their exit from situations of modern slavery.

RECOMMENDATION #13

Police should only be involved in the response with the caller's permission.



PART C- THE ROLE OF SURVIVORS AS FIRST RESPONDERS

58% of research participants said first responders should be people with lived experience. This section explores how people with lived experience fast track the trust building process, what it would take for survivors to operate as first responders and how survivor networks can be involved.

TRUST AND PEOPLE WHO JUST GET IT

Research participants were keen to see survivors engaged in the role of first responder. As people who ‘just get it’, survivors were understood to be more empathetic and understanding of the trauma and dynamics of being in a situation of modern slavery. Research participants recommended that any helpline be staffed by survivors with several different experiences to reach a wider group of people.

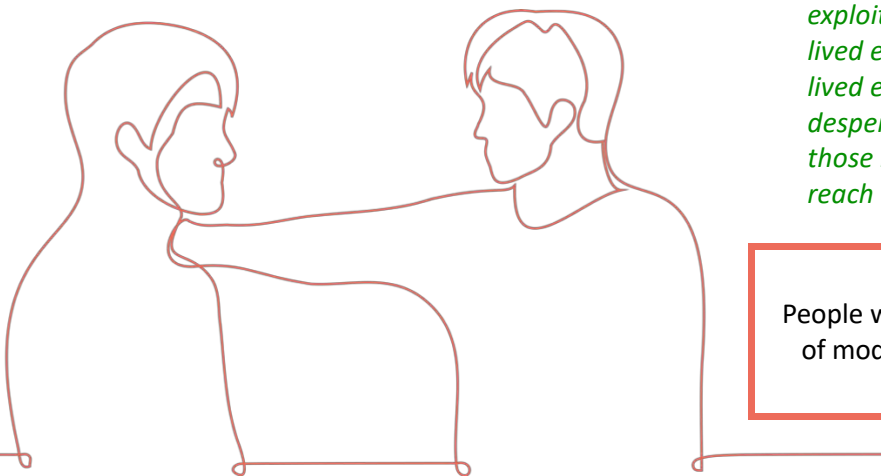
“It is always easier and far more helpful I believe to be able to speak to someone who has lived experience of what you yourself are going through. This provides that straight up relatedness that can be the difference between someone trusting the support offered or feeling unheard and walking away.” – Amy, Australia

“Hotlines need to be manned by trauma informed teams, survivors or survivor led teams, people who are empathetic, understanding, kind, and whose voices have a calming welcoming tone... I take about 30 calls a week, some at 2am, 5am, midnight. Some just want to chat, vent, have human contact... Its important your front line responders have support, that they are checked in with constantly, that they have breaks in between calls to process, vent, cry eat, or talk to someone about what happened so they can put it all out there and then put it to the side.” – Becca, Australia

“Someone with a deeper understanding of exploitation. Most preferably someone with lived experience. It takes someone with lived experience to fully understand the desperation victim survivors go through in those moments when they are trying to reach out.” – Jo, Australia

RECOMMENDATION #14

People with lived experience from various types of modern slavery should be engaged as first responders on helplines.



WHAT SURVIVORS NEED TO ASSUME FIRST RESPONDER ROLES

40% of research participants said they already do or would like to provide support to other survivors. When asked what they would need to assume these roles, research participants said:

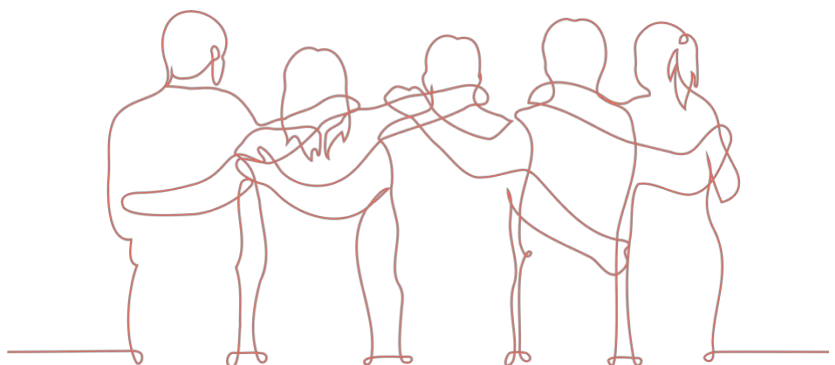
- **Debriefing:** there was a consensus that debriefing was required using various methods: access to a therapist for regular debriefs, emotional support, counselling, supervision, peer support and an employee assistance program (EAP). Research participants understood that cases of modern slavery are unique and would not be the same as their lived experience. They also understood that working on a helpline could be triggering so this would need to be managed.
- **Training:** Research participants understood that whilst they had lived experience, they would still benefit from training for a first responder role. Requested training included trauma informed care, vicarious trauma, modern slavery legislation and indicators, which services are available and their intake criteria, client centred approaches, work-life balance, migrant support, mental health, cultural sensitivity, suicide prevention and response, privacy & confidentiality, case management, social work, building resilience and training on what to say and what not to say.
- **Dedicated workspace for relaxation:** Research participants advocated for a place to 'wind down' or process after a difficult call.
- **Gym membership:** 16% of research participants suggested a gym membership (or equivalent) would help to rejuvenate their body and mind.

"I have found connecting with other survivors and working to elevate survivor voices healing, and believe that it is important in preventing harm from taking place again." –Lisa, Australia

"I believe first responders should be constantly supported in case they experience vicarious trauma or burnout and make sure they have work-life balance where their physical and emotional well-being are looked after and supported while offering trauma-informed assistance to victims." – Michael, New Zealand

RECOMMENDATION #15

People with lived experience working as first responders must be provided with professional trauma informed and other trainings as along with regular professional debriefing sessions.



PART D- INVOLVING SURVIVOR NETWORKS IN RECOVERY

SURVIVOR NETWORKS HELP THE RECOVERY PROCESS

Once survivors are out of immediate danger, there is a journey of recovery. Connection with other survivors is important in this healing process. It could also include a range of services to help build resilience and reduce re-traumatising survivors to support their recovery. 58% of research participants referenced this as a priority.

“I didn't consider that this might be modern slavery until I joined a survivor's group and started talking to others about their experiences. I can't stress enough how important survivor's support was in giving me the language to express what had happened to me, and start the healing process... Consulting survivors and people with lived experience is ESSENTIAL to getting the right kind of help to the people who need it, in a way that is accessible for them.” – Rose, Australia

Creating an online space for survivor networks could be a valuable and empowering initiative. – Mary, Australia

“I think that an online forum type site could be helpful, where people could post questions or musings, vents or events for in person support groups etc There could be a section for information or a list of services that might be helpful such as low-cost food centres, legal support, hampers, vouchers etc.” – Rose, Australia

“What someone needs for assistance or help will definitely range from case to case. If you want to actually help people, it shouldn't just be for situations you deem as ‘emergencies’. Assistance could range from housing, crisis support, getting people connected with government services, food/clothing vouchers and possibly even branding scars/tattoo removal or cover up (as this does happen).” – Jo, Australia

“Some features that might be helpful are: discussion forums; peer support groups; resource listings; educational resources; tools for self-care and coping strategies.” Michael, New Zealand

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO ENSURE PROTECTED SURVIVOR NETWORKS

A well-resourced online space must be safe for both survivors and people experiencing modern slavery to access discreetly. It would require technical support to ensure their safety.

“Technical (requirements) would definitely need to be encrypted and have the highest security. Survivors should be given the option to remain anonymous if they choose. I think the design of the site would also need to be discreet, perhaps with a kill switch that could be customised to take the victim quickly to a site that would not raise suspicion with their abuser.” – Rose, Australia

“Having an online space is a wonderful idea, although it needs to be safe, anonymous, private and it would need to be monitored. I would highly recommend a screening check or some form of membership process to ensure that perpetrators are not able to access the online spaces and the people that do have access and genuinely survivors/victims.” – Michelle, Australia

RECOMMENDATION #16

Victim-survivors who have been assessed and validated through the helplines could be referred to a password protected survivor network portal to help their ongoing recovery and connect survivors with a range of services.



EXHORTATIONS FROM THE RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Some final words to consider from the research participants:

*A hotline is so much more than a hotline, it is the first point of a call for a person who is terrified of what is happening to them and is desperate to get help.” – **Becca, Australia***

*“We urgently need victim-survivor voices and leadership in the Modern Slavery space. Victim-survivors struggle to access supports even if we have been trying for years.”
Mary, Australia*

*“I can imagine that for a lot of people, the courage they would have had to muster to reach out cannot be understated. So that person who takes the call or text has to be trauma-informed as well. And I can also imagine that for most, that one chance to reach out might be the only chance that they have - so the response has to be timely, meaningful, and proactive. The helpline has to make that first interaction matter and count because it could very well be their last.” – **Michael, New Zealand***

*“Raising public awareness of modern slavery is a vital part of ending modern slavery along with bringing more survivors forward to seek help. We see domestic violence campaigns regularly on the television, news and social media, but what we are needing is more awareness of modern slavery so that the general public are aware of what is happening in our country and so that survivors know where to go to for help.” – **Michelle, Australia***

*“People are dying every day in these situations, it's not an exaggeration that a good helpline has the potential to save hundreds and thousands of lives.” – **Rose, Australia***



ABOUT SLAVECHECK

SlaveCheck is comprised of two organisations: SlaveCheck Pty Ltd – the technology and services ‘for profit’ side - and the SlaveCheck Foundation Ltd – the charity arm that manages the ‘for purpose’ side.

Working together, they provide a global, survivor-centric modern slavery due diligence system - powered by SlaveCheck’s ‘collective intelligence’ clearinghouse – to lead, coordinate and manage the systematic elimination of modern slavery.

SlaveCheck’s unique ‘top-down / bottom-up’ approach provides corporates with a cost-effective digital compliance solution for anti-slavery legislation globally.

In parallel, SlaveCheck works with governments and NGOs, designing, funding, and implementing solutions to help victims of modern slavery to engage, provide them with safe and trusted pathways out of slavery, and to effect the system-level changes in supply chains necessary to address the root causes of modern slavery.

SlaveCheck’s ‘profit-for-purpose’ business model means the solution is self-funding.

SlaveCheck Pty Ltd
www.slavecheck.com

The SlaveCheck Foundation
www.slavecheck.org

