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# The Lived Experience Engagement Program Report 2023

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Salvation Army acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters throughout Australia. We acknowledge that First Nations peoples have experienced exploitation, forced labour, servitude and slavery as part of Australia's history of colonisation. We recognise both the intergenerational impacts of this oppression and the endurance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and cultures despite this. We pay our respect to Elders and acknowledge their continuing relationship to this land and the ongoing living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples across Australia.

## OUR COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION

We value and include people of all cultures, languages, abilities, sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and intersex status. We are committed to providing programs that are fully inclusive. We are committed to the safety and wellbeing of people of all ages, particularly children.

### Our values are:

- Integrity
- Compassion
- Respect
- Diversity
- Collaboration



## PROJECT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Salvation Army is grateful for the invaluable insights of the experts consulted for the development of the Lived Experience Engagement Program model, and consultant Dr Laura Vidal who created the Written Model. Gratitude is extended to past and present members of The Salvation Army (TSA) LEEP team, Sherry Wanjiru, Yvette Proud, Melina Matthia, Claudia Cummins and Heather Moore for their work on bringing the program to life and supporting it to flourish. We thank the TSA Research team Belinda Hendrickson, Dr Ellie Taylor, Dr Jasmine Loo, Dr Eliza de Vet and Dr Johana Susanto who skillfully created a rigorous monitoring and evaluation framework using a representative participatory approach, capturing and providing feedback on the program throughout its duration for continuous improvement. We thank Consultant Psychologist Carolina Barreto for her empowering support of LEEP participants individually and as a group, as well as guidance for the LEEP staffing team. The Salvation Army thanks the Government departments' representatives for their genuine collaboration and strong commitment to embedding lived experience engagement. We are also very grateful for the support of the TSA Media team in partnering on the production of the LEEP video "Nothing About Us Without Us". Likewise, we thank Neil Hawkins for his generous in-kind professional design of this report.

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Finally, immeasurable gratitude is extended to the six LEEP participants and members of Australia's inaugural Survivor Advisory Council who brought incredible dedication, insight and passion for driving change, while supporting and encouraging each other along the way. Thank you for your leadership and partnership, making the pilot SAC the success it was.

### Glossary

AGD	Attorney General's Department
AFP	Australian Federal Police
CDPP	Commonwealth Department of Public Prosecutions
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
DESE	Department of Education, Skills and Employment
DSS	Department of Social Services
FWO	Fair Work Ombudsman
SAC	Survivor Advisory Council
LEEP	Lived Experience Engagement Program
TSA	The Salvation Army

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# SECTION 1-INTRODUCTION

Survivor Advisory Council members Sarah and Moe reflect on their experiences of the first iteration of the LEEP.

‘We would like to acknowledge the other four members of the SAC for their time, friendship and collaboration in this ‘brave space’.

## 1. Visibility and culture change.

A large part of our healing as survivors is about regaining/reclaiming our decision-making powers and having control over our own stories and representation. We want people to recognise that people with lived experience are the experts on our own lives. We should have the power to shape the discourse through visibility and self-representation. The LEEP program has enabled us to achieve that.

Culture shapes attitudes, beliefs and behaviours in our societies. To bring meaningful change, it is important to address cultural norms and practices that perpetuate discrimination, exclusion and survivor isolation.

This might involve promoting survivor leadership, cultural diversity and inclusivity, and respect for a range of experiences. We would like to work together with you in partnership across disciplines, to raise awareness of modern slavery in communities and supply chains.

Changing the narratives in this movement requires active engagement. Welcoming people with lived experiences into the heart of discussion can transform stereotypes about survivors and bring about holistic change. Programs like LEEP are to be acknowledged for creating “brave spaces” for survivors to be strong enough to advocate for narratives to be changed and progress to become reality.

## 2. Empowerment and Transformation

Survivors of modern slavery often find themselves ‘free’ only to find others ultimately hold our fate in their hands. Hopelessness, helplessness, fear, and anger can become all-pervasive in the midst of the shame that comes from having lost, and continuing to lose, one’s sense of dignity and autonomy. The ability to reclaim one’s voice or participate in one’s own journey of recovery by engaging in lived experience work, can counteract some of this sense of disempowerment. We often don’t talk about the transformative power of telling our truth.

*“By hearing our voices, you are helping us reclaim our power, rebuilding that which was broken, empowering us. I (Sarah) can’t change what happened to me, but I can change it for others, like me. For me LEEP was the key to this transformation – this power. It aimed to provide us with the appropriate support and training to engage in meaningful advocacy work. The LEEP program taught me about our Government structure, legislation, the departments and organisations responsible for our modern slavery responses. It taught me how to look after my physical, mental, and legal safety as I engaged in advocacy work. I learned how to structure speeches and gain confidence in using my voice. I certainly have a lot to learn, but by opening the door to lived experience engagement, I was given these opportunities in achievable ways”.*

### 3. Trauma and justice

We have learned from each other that justice looks different to all of us. In justice journeys, we must acknowledge the impact of trauma on wellbeing. Along every step of the way, we must create safe and supportive environments, promote trust and collaboration, and allow survivors to have self-determination in their own healing processes. This contributes greatly to experiences of justice. With the right support and through the passage of time, survivors can navigate their journey, find meaning in their experiences and move forward with renewed purpose and resilience.

### 4. Opportunity

We encourage you to create opportunities for people with lived experience to excel. We often bring clarity to what truly matters in life. Bring us together with community organisations, service providers policy makers and other stakeholders to identify gaps and develop comprehensive solutions. These opportunities enhance knowledge, abilities and employability. Access to employment has been a significant topic for LEEP and the SAC. Employability helps survivors set priorities and meaningful goals aligned with their values and aspirations.

### 5. Partnerships in antislavery responses is an outcome

The transition for a person with lived experience from recipient to participant in direct contribution is a new endeavor in the Australian modern slavery sector. How do we embrace the opportunity of building partnerships that have the potential to close the gaps? We create spaces, that allow people with lived experience to build the capacity to participate as equals. Not all people with lived experience will want to engage in public speaking and may instead have strengths in other areas of interest such as policy and project development. We are all different – with unique interests and capabilities and backgrounds, so it is important to consider opportunities collaboratively. Conversations about capacity and well-being are crucial, if lived experience work is to be empowering.

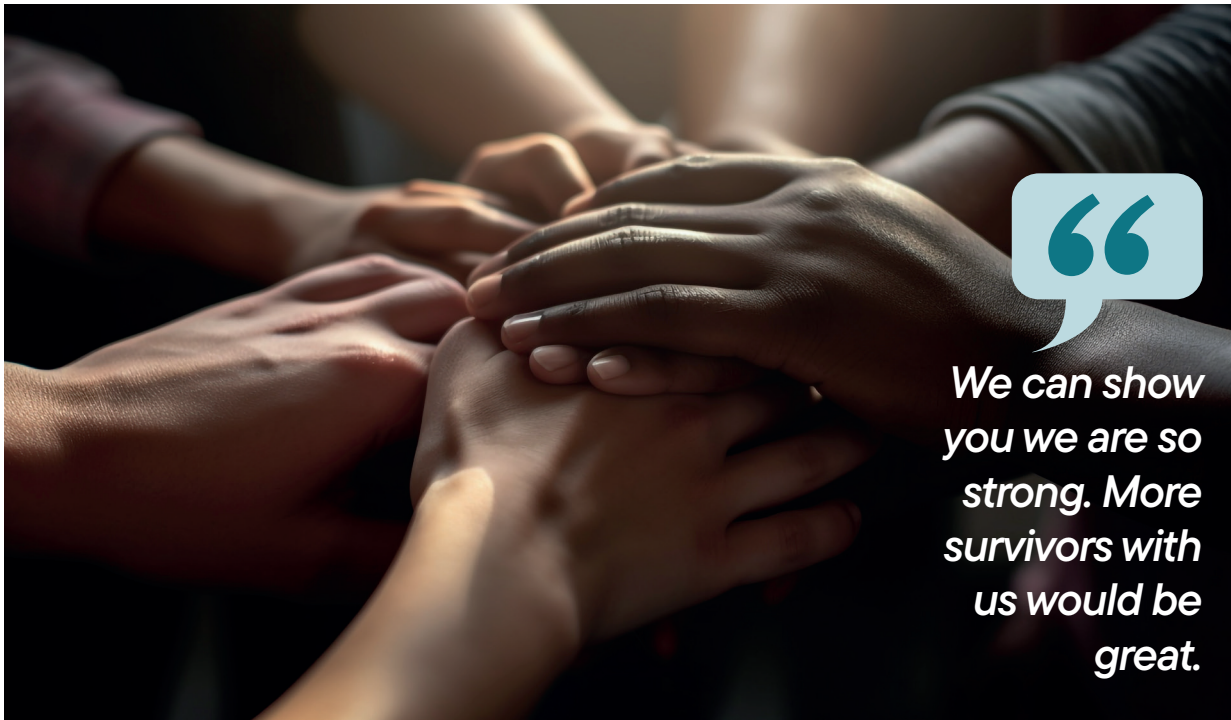
### 6. The Power of Peers

In order to build the capacity of people with lived experience to engage in these partnerships, I think it is equally important to support the development of a survivor community and peer support. When I first started in advocacy work in the modern slavery sector, I couldn't even find other survivors.

LEEP first connected me with other survivors, creating opportunities to develop peer support and community. From that small beginning, we have grown, and together with a small group of people with lived experience, we have created an independent survivor-led group called Survivor Connections. Survivor Connections started as a support group and a resource space for people with lived experience of modern slavery (both with our website and referral to support services) and is now taking steps to becoming an incorporated association. As I reflect on this first instalment of the LEEP and the impact it has had in seeing meaningful engagement of lived experience in the sector, I am in awe of the transformative power this initiative has had. I am excited for its future expansion and hope to see many more survivors joining our ranks in the future

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## SECTION 2-EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS



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*We can show you we are so strong. More survivors with us would be great.*

The Salvation Army (TSA) delivered the Lived Experience Engagement Program (LEEP) with the aim of creating a forum for survivors of criminal labour exploitation to use their lived experience to directly consult with government, to assist in preventing, identifying and responding to modern slavery. This program was funded by the Australian Government’s National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020-25 Grant Program for two years from August 2021. This included a program design phase and one year of operating the program to facilitate the creation of a pilot Survivor Advisory Council (SAC) to government. The LEEP addressed the lack of official forum for survivors of modern slavery in Australia to engage directly with government and supported the National Action Plan action item to develop a victim and survivor engagement and empowerment strategy.

The development of the LEEP model took an appreciative inquiry approach, drawing upon the depth of best practice lived experience engagement work occurring overseas in the anti-slavery movement as well as within the Australian context across diverse sectors. The model development included a review of the literature and existing frameworks, followed by consultation interviews with survivor advocates and lived experience experts in Australia and overseas. The LEEP model has also drawn on The Salvation Army’s own experience in amplifying survivor voice through the Freedom Advocates program and its Lived Experience and Participation Framework. Consultations sought to understand modes of effective lived experience engagement and necessary support structures in order to establish best practice principles to guide the operations of the LEEP and the SAC.

The LEEP framework was operationalised from July 2022 – August 2023, bringing together a group of 6 survivors of criminal labour exploitation to form the pilot Survivor Advisory Council. As part of the onboarding, participants took part in informed consent processes, risk assessment, and safety and wellbeing planning with LEEP staff and the consultant psychologist. Group formation occurred and participants took part in individual and group goal setting as well as training on skills relevant to working in policy advocacy and partnership with government, for example understanding the structure of Australian Government and the positioning of the National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020-25.

From December 2022 – August 2023, the 6 members of the SAC took part in consultations with government representatives on a number of key government policy initiatives, as well as participating in the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery, the National Modern Slavery Conference and several other engagement opportunities with key stakeholders. The LEEP supported SAC members through regular group and individual meetings focused on preparation and debriefing, with most consultations held online. SAC members received honorariums for their time and contribution in SAC consultations, and additional expenses such as childcare expenses and interstate travel were reimbursed. LEEP staff facilitated access to engagement with the Consultant Psychologist for support and connected participants with legal advice as required, based on their individual circumstances and public engagement risks.

The monitoring and evaluation framework for the LEEP and pilot Survivor Advisory Council took a representative participatory approach. Feedback and input from all parties associated with the program – survivor participants, program facilitators, government representatives – was sought throughout the duration of the program through surveys and interviews, evaluating the program impacts at an individual and systemic level.

#### **The project has achieved its objectives to:**

1. Develop an evidence-based, survivor-endorsed written model for ethical and effective government engagement with survivors of modern slavery, particularly criminal labour exploitation.
2. To provide an empowering forum for victim-survivors of criminal labour exploitation to safely utilize their lived experience to create positive change
3. Provide constructive consultation to Government and key agencies on how to most effectively prevent, identify and disrupt criminal labour exploitation occurring in Australia.

#### **In doing so, project monitoring and evaluation against key overarching questions has found:**

- Individual and system level outcomes arising from the program, including:
  - Movement from lived experience to lived expertise
  - Confidence
  - Peer connection
  - Knowledge and skill development
- Efficacy of the LEEP and SAC model in meeting program aims and in attaining significant outcomes across the lifespan of the program.



## Key Recommendations

**Increase opportunities for survivor peer connection.** This was quickly evident when group development activities demonstrated the impact of identification with other survivors where there had been little or none beforehand. This is believed to be due to a lack of accessible survivor networks. The time together was described as impactful in contributing to a sense of inclusion and a reduction in shame and isolation.

**Increase LEEP opportunities for peer connection separately to Survivor Advisory Council work.** Future iterations of the LEEP would do well to be resourced for greater peer connections and development running alongside the SAC. Dedicated time and space, with facilitation, will greatly support individuals, the development of collective consciousness, and the sustainability of initiatives like the SAC.

**Increase capacity for peer-led group facilitation and training.** Peer development opportunities should include a focus on raising the leadership capabilities of survivors to become more independent in collective voice and advocacy work.

**Investigate alternative approaches to traditional risk assessment in supporting lived experience advocacy.** Move towards centring survivor agency and elements of self-assessment in supporting survivors to do this work.

**Co-design engagements to facilitate increased survivor control, leadership and visibility.** Not every engagement activity can or should be co-designed or co-produced, however incorporating principles of co-design in aspects of all engagements is a viable option. This provides greater control for survivors in constructing how they wish to engage, and greater safety within the engagement.

**Build in adequate time to prepare for survivor engagements.** For successful work together the time spent in preparation is capacity-building, empowering and supports meaningful experiences for all parties.

**Enhance partnerships within the anti-slavery sector** to provide support to survivors to participate in many forms of engagement. Investigate providing infrastructure support if desired by emergent groups as they establish themselves.

**Commit to the ongoing status and long-range support from Government for the Survivor Advisory Council.** The LEEP pilot has demonstrated that direct voice is a viable platform. Consideration should be given to longer term mechanisms to embed survivor voice, for example: survivor leadership training and professional development initiatives and the continuation of the Council as an advisory body beyond the pilot phase.

**Consider the ongoing inclusion of survivors in government and business initiatives.** For example, The Survivor Advisory Council's participation and presentation at the 2022 Ministerial Meeting of the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery was impactful and included insightful contribution on key issues from survivors' perspectives. Further opportunities for survivors to work in partnership with government and civil society are needed to utilise these forums as the expert consultation spaces.

**Increase employment opportunities for people with lived experience.** The freedom to work, and the power it can return to survivors means moving forward with their lives. This may be within antislavery work or elsewhere.

## SECTION 3-CONTEXT AND CONSIDERATIONS

It is acknowledged that there is an ever-increasing number of people being impacted by extreme labour exploitation that is recognised under the term modern slavery. This can include trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices including deceptive recruitment, debt bondage, forced labour and servitude. The effects of climate change, conflict, poverty and the recent pandemic are increasing the likelihood of people being forced to take extraordinary risks and becoming vulnerable to exploiters and perpetrators. The Australian Institute of Criminology estimates in 2015-16 and 2016-17, there were between 1300 and 1900 people living in modern slavery in Australia<sup>1</sup>. Other research such as Walk Free's most recent Global Slavery Index<sup>2</sup>, based on different methodology, estimates that there could be as many as 41,000 people living in conditions of modern slavery in 2021. These statistics highlight the hidden nature of this crime.

Whether exploitation is occurring somewhere in a business's supply chain, within private domestic work or within the commercial sex industry, the tools used to deceive, coerce and exploit individuals are evolving rapidly. The need to find effective solutions is crucial, and survivor experience plays an integral role in achieving this. The National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020-25 guides the Australian response and recognises there is a role for survivors in these responses. While there are many contributions by survivors in anonymous and in some public facing initiatives supported by NGOs, until now there have been a lack of formal consultation mechanisms and peer networks with the purpose of speaking directly to decision-makers. We are fortunate to have decades of international survivor-led advocacy evidence to help inform the Australian context:

*'Specifically, in relation to human trafficking and slavery victim-survivor empowerment, inclusion and advocacy has been emerging since the mid 2000's. Civil society groups around the world have supported victim-survivors to organise and participate in diverse initiatives from awareness raising to policy formation. This includes in the United States, the formation of the United States Advisory Council on Human Trafficking which came in as part of the Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act (2015). This Act establishes a survivor advisory council to the United States Government for the express purpose of providing advice and recommendations on law and policy related to human trafficking'.*

Vidal, I. (2022). *'Lived Experience Engagement Program: Working with victim-survivors of criminal labour exploitation'*

Additionally, there are survivor-led organisations working directly with vulnerable and affected communities, and are dedicated to developing survivor voices and capabilities, directed by survivor-identified areas of strength and need. During the life of the LEEP the international organisation Survivor Alliance has developed their Action Plan for Survivor Leadership in the Next Decade by working together with survivor members across the globe. A LEEP member's contribution to this development committee ensured an Australian-based voice was included.

### Why Lived Experience?

Survivor participants in LEEP have expressed that becoming survivor advocates and playing a part in combating modern slavery is incredibly meaningful to them. Survivors have shared their very specific understandings, and offer solutions to stop trafficking and slavery for so many more people, and to receive justice outcomes.

1 Lyneham, Samantha, Dowling, Christopher and Bricknell, Samantha. Estimating the dark figure of human trafficking and slavery victimisation in Australia. Statistical Bulletins No. 16. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology, 2019.

2 <http://www.walkfree.org/global-slavery-index/country-studies/australia/>

Survivors have shared their passion for freedom and justice. Not only do they bring their knowledge, survivors bring a unique sense of urgency. In so doing, survivors have expressed that expanding the nature of antislavery relationships to partnerships carries the potential of mutuality. This shift is at the heart of lived experience contribution and survivor leadership.

Across many social justice contexts, lived experience engagement has become a greater expectation in the forming of legislation, in public policy and program design, in service delivery and community resourcing. Lived experience participation is intended to provide expert insights into design for complexity, in order to identify and achieve fairer outcomes for those who have the greatest stake. Participation and genuine cooperation and collaboration with stakeholders is a commitment to human rights and democratic processes, and to justice outcomes. People who are most affected by public policy need to have access to opportunities to share their insights at multiple levels and through methods accessible to them, to improve the way systems work.

Survivor participation and leadership is a meaningful piece of the justice puzzle and has been referred to as transitional justice:

*‘Transitional justice for human trafficking survivors primarily focuses on reforms to institutions and policies and educational and memorial initiatives, such as human trafficking awareness campaigns and speaking with policymakers regarding human trafficking–related legislation’.*

Lilly Yu, Jeanette Hussemann, Hanna Love, Evelyn McCoy, and Colleen Owens March 2018 – *‘Alternative Forms of Justice for Human Trafficking Survivors’*.

Lived experience participation demonstrates that survivors have multiple threads of story and identity and are not only defined by their traumas (as in narrative therapy and approaches). They have agency and power, skills and capabilities and can connect or reconnect and share their gifts and learnings for the common good, if they choose.

### **Designing participation, inclusion and leadership**

This project’s literature review and environment scan drew from Australian and international evidence to find that people with lived experience (of mental health, homelessness and disability) have become involved and participate along a continuum. The LEEP Written Model references the Ladder of Citizen participation (Arnstein, 1969) and Degrees of Participation (Tressider, 1997) as underpinning theories (among others), however acknowledges that there are some environmental limitations to engagement at more active and responsible levels, including the current early stage of direct survivor voice to government in Australia.

The LEEP framework is therefore grounded in ‘responsive’ aspects of participation (such as informing and advising,) though not without future ambition towards partnership and delegated power of Arnstein’s model. In fact, through the operationalising of the LEEP, opportunities have arisen or have been created by participants that surpass the scope of the project.

The literature review and environmental scan acknowledges the international survivor leader Minh Dang and her own published principles of engagement ‘as a central reminder of the role victim-survivors have in designing their own participation and inclusion, rather than being a passive recipient of services and opportunities’.

As survivor networking and leadership evolves in Australia, survivors themselves can shape lived experience representation, learning from the international survivor leadership community, from other intersectional fora within Australia, and from their own participation experiences in peer networks and in opportunities like the LEEP.

The intention of LEEP has been to provide infrastructure and support for survivors to develop and to represent themselves. While not an independent group, the program has been carefully intentional to co-create and maintain space for participants to share their thoughts and drive their own involvement, without the expectation that they represent the views of the TSA. LEEP support has included the necessary learning about shaping relationships, becoming informed about antislavery responses and crafting messaging for a range of audiences. However, LEEP recognises survivor voice and the tone of engagement may be naturally and necessarily different from the voices of professionals in this space.

### Learning allyship

Paid professionals are on a journey justice, travelling from perceptions of people with lived experience solely as service recipients towards potential roles as partners and leaders in decision-making and reform. This reframes survivors as potential actors and co-creators.

In considering what this means, the following piece from survivor leaders on allyship is illuminating:

*'Allyship is an ongoing reflection on one's own privilege, actions, and biases that further systemic oppression; it is an active, consistent, and arduous practice of unlearning and re-evaluating. Allies share power with and take direction from many diverse people with lived experiences to break down systems that contribute to marginalization. Allies acknowledge that prior practices have caused harm to those with lived experience, and take accountability. Allies hold space and make space by decentering themselves so that people with lived experience can reach their individual goals, and work in solidarity to promote their well-being.'*

*From: 'Meaningful Engagement of People with Lived Experience. A framework and assessment for measuring and increasing lived experience leadership across the spectrum of engagement'*

*Written by: Chris Ash, National Survivor Network - CAST Sophie Otiende, Global Fund to End Modern Slavery*

### Strengths

The intention of the Survivor Advisory Council within this project is to engage constructively with government. In so doing, survivor voices may highlight the limitations of current responses, and some will be the voices of people who have been excluded from support or have 'fallen through the cracks'. With access to grassroots knowledge and experiences of how legislation, policy and practices have been applied, government and stakeholders can gain a sharper understanding of its impact and efficacy.

### Challenges and tensions

There are undoubtedly risks and challenges that survivors of modern slavery face in Australia, including varying rights to reside in Australia; legal cases and their outcomes; and trauma healing processes. These require careful advice and support for decision-making about engagement opportunities and may result in the need for sustained anonymity. This has been addressed on an individualised level by the LEEP and some participants have chosen not to be public facing at all. Decisions were reached through either a joint assessment of risk or by personal choice based on confidence.

It can be a challenge to strike the right balance of personal agency and duty of care, ensuring this duty does not progress to protection overreach and the unintentional undermining of dignity.

As the LEEP is seated within an organisation that provides services, it conforms to and supports established ethics and practices, while also seeking to be influenced by modelling from established engagement in related social justice advocacy and representation. This approach has also been guided by survivors

themselves as they progress through their time with the LEEP and co-design their engagements.

Establishing new roles and relationships between survivors and stakeholders requires ongoing discussion, negotiation and re-negotiation. In more direct terms 'It is not inclusion if you invite people into a space you are unwilling to change' (attributed to Muna Abdi).

### Transformation

Making space for survivor voice and leadership requires a transformation of business as usual in antislavery responses. The Attorney General's Department (AGD) participants in this project have truly understood the brief and at all times showed their willingness to be flexible and to be led by the needs of survivors in interactions. They have shared what has been learned both in policy advice and in engagement practice with interdepartmental staff and this advice is starting to appear in policy work.

As mentioned in the introduction, and evidenced in the evaluation report, LEEP and SAC members have also found their experiences in the program personally transformative.

*'The theory of Post-Traumatic Growth offers important evidence toward the benefit of victim-survivors engaging in lived experience participation. This includes an acknowledgement that despite a traumatic experience, an individual can have profound positive psychological changes, including 'bouncing forward' (Van Slyke, 2015). This is contrast to the more commonly understood concept of 'bouncing back' after a traumatic event. Bouncing forward recognises that following trauma one does not return to who they once were, and provided the right support and opportunities can positively develop.'* - Laura Vidal.  
Vidal, L. (2021). "Lived Experience Engagement: A review of the literature and best-practice models". Laura Emily Consultancy, Sydney, Australia

LEEP experiences that may encompass 'bouncing forward' include benefiting from peer connections, support and deep discussions to make meaning and sense, (including with the LEEP consultant psychologist), and the acquisition of employable skills.



## SECTION 4-BUILDING AN EVIDENCE BASE

The first objective of the LEEP was to develop an evidence-based, survivor-endorsed written model for ethical and effective government engagement with survivors of modern slavery, particularly criminal labour exploitation.

Under this objective a suite of key pieces of work contributed to the production of the Written Model for Lived Experience Engagement Program. These consisted of:

- a) **A Literature Review** exploring lived experience as part of program and policy development, benefits and impacts for individuals and systems by engaging lived experience expertise and central principles of lived experience program design.
- b) **A Review of existing lived experience and survivor empowerment programs** in the modern slavery space as well as in areas of domestic and family violence, mental health and refugee and asylum seeker issues.
- c) **LEEP design and engagement principles, informed by interviews with survivor advocates and leaders** with lived experience of modern slavery, in Australia and overseas, and interviews with other leaders in lived experience engagement programs in other sectors.
- d) **A Monitoring and Evaluation Framework** to measure the impact of the program on the integration of lived experience into the roll-out of the NAP, and impact of participation in the program on survivor's sense of empowerment.
- e) **Feedback and endorsement from survivor focus group.**

The development of the LEEP model took an appreciative inquiry approach, acknowledging that although lived experience engagement work is underdeveloped in the Australian anti-slavery movement, there has been significant achievements in this work overseas. The LEEP model also sought to draw upon the depth of best practice lived experience engagement work occurring in the Australian context in areas such as mental health, family violence response and settlement support. This occurred through a review of the literature and existing frameworks, followed by consultation interviews with survivor advocates and lived experience experts in Australia and overseas. The LEEP model has also drawn on The Salvation Army's own experience in amplifying survivor voice through the Freedom Advocates program and its Lived Experience and Participation Framework.

Consultations sought to understand both modes of effective lived experience engagement, and the support structures necessary to ensure that engagement resulted in positive impacts on those sharing their lived experience and mitigated any safety or well-being risk. Through thematic analysis of ten consultations with modern slavery survivor leaders, family violence survivor advocates and lived experience program coordinators from various sectors, the following principles of best practice emerged:

**Empowerment:** Participation in lived experience engagement should create opportunities for key leadership skills to be developed and strengthened

**Equity & equality:** Lived experience work should be valued equally to that of other professionals, and

structural barriers to participation must be addressed

**Diversity & inclusion:** Diverse experiences are represented to ensure contributions are reflective of a range of experiences, and appropriate support and flexibility provided to enable this

**Visibility:** Survivors' lived experience is recognised and acknowledged as being valuable and integral to creating change, with opportunities for survivors to be present and part of decision-making events and discussions

**Transparency:** There is clarity and consistency about the purpose and process of engagement and opportunities for ongoing feedback to improve participation

**Safety:** Maintaining physical and psychological safety and minimising any risk of negative legal impacts is integral to engagement, with individual support strategies consistently reviewed

**Trust:** Relationships developed through lived experience engagement work are collaborative and reflective of the other core principles including equality, transparency, empowerment and safety.

**Support:** Individualised and holistic support is provided to uphold safety and well-being throughout participation in lived experience engagement work.

### Why build an evidence base?

Developing an evidence base of a program provides the foundation for understanding what aspects of a program works, why it works, and who it works for. An evidence base of the LEEP not only enhances the programs credibility, it also enables stakeholders to evaluate the impact of the program, while promoting a culture of accountability and continuous improvement.

### Participatory Approach to evaluation

A Participatory approach to evaluation is utilised to ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives, experiences and voices, providing a more authentic measurement of program impact. This approach empowers individuals to contribute their insights and expertise, and promotes a sense of ownership within the community. In the context of the LEEP, it is anticipated that the process will strengthen the sustainability of initiatives, by aligning more closely with the needs of the people they aim to support.

### Reflections and future recommendations

Utilising a representative participatory approach was successful in ensuring sustainability and fairness – facilitating partnerships and equity with the people the LEEP serves. In future program iterations, pending resourcing, it would be advisable to seek participant advice about potential evaluation measures (i.e., indicator development) informed by their experiences with LEEP, thereby shaping monitoring and evaluation methodology through a lived experience lens.

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## SECTION 5-PLANNING ENGAGEMENT AND WELCOMING SURVIVOR PARTICIPANTS

In the development of the LEEP framework, three key considerations were identified and included in 'Pillars of Operation'. These were Physical, Psychological and Legal safety. These shaped the planning of engagements and of welcoming of participants into the program.

The LEEP framework was operationalised from July 2022 to August 2023, inviting a small group of survivors of criminal labour exploitation onto the program to form the pilot Survivor Advisory Council. Guided by the consultation findings, LEEP provided the necessary training, preparation, support and remuneration to survivors as they engaged with government and other key stakeholders to share their lived expertise as the pilot Survivor Advisory Council.

Survivors were supported to learn and apply skills to effectively engage with government in consultations related to initiatives to address criminal labour exploitation. This included training on how government operates, the National Action Plan, communication and public speaking and managing boundaries and well-being.

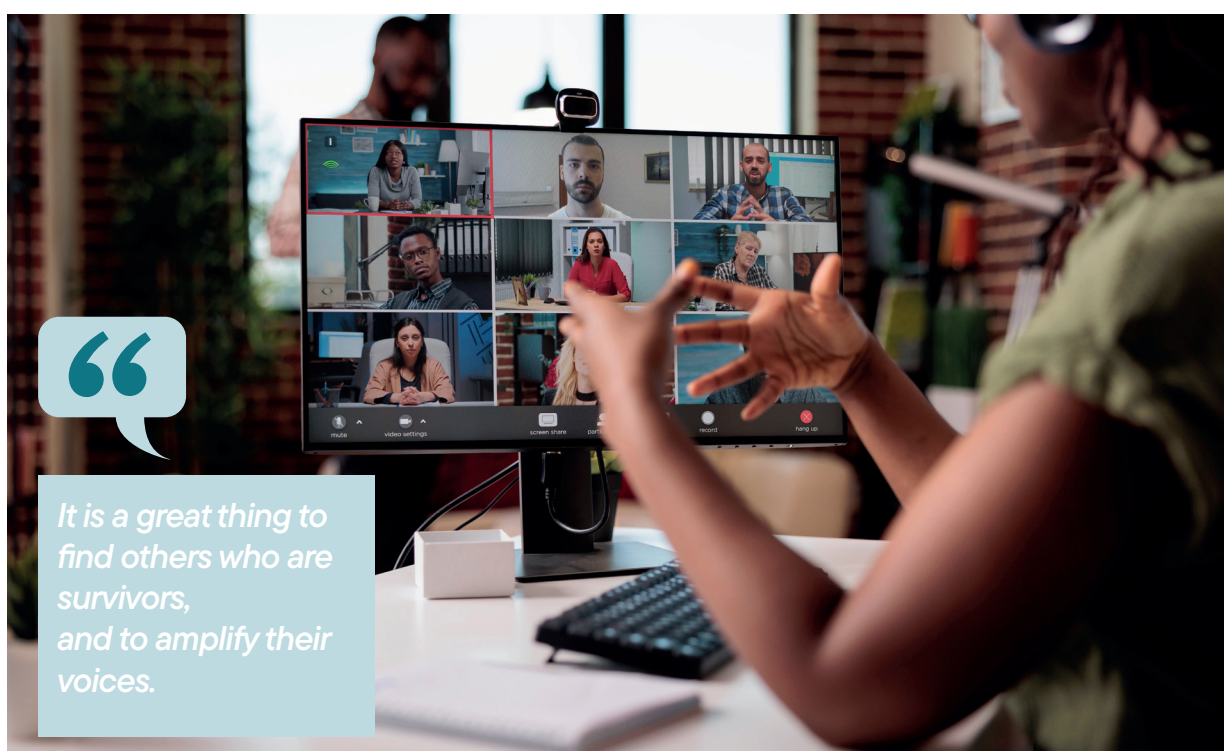
LEEP participants had access to support and debriefing with the Project Officer and the Consultant Psychologist throughout their time on the program. Survivors were linked with legal advice as required. Importantly, survivors received remuneration for Survivor Advisory Council participation, and reimbursement of expenses such as travel and childcare.

The project sought the support of sector colleagues to assist to contact potential participants, being known and 'safe' connections for initial information sharing and introductions. A brochure and an information sheet were distributed to a wide range of stakeholders. An expression of interest process was initiated when potential participants were found, and an information booklet was shared and individually explained in detail with potential participants to support their informed consent.

Individual risk assessments were conducted and wellbeing plans established for all participants, covering legal, psychological, and physical safety as per the Written Model. This included legal information provided by a firm about defamation, contempt of court, and preserving anonymity if considered the safest option. Several people chose to use pseudonyms. This information was also translated into easy-to-read English.

Participants connected with the Consultant Psychologist, either during the onboarding period or the project, with access to 1-3 sessions initially to consider whether the program was right for them, to unpack any concerns, create wellbeing strategies and to start to formulate their identity as a survivor with expertise and as a potential leader.





Individual goals were also developed with participants to assist them to be aware of their own motivations, to align with the goals of the project and to influence the program implementation; to reflect on their own paths over time; and to assist in the transitional phase of the project at the conclusion of the grant.

It was a priority for the LEEP to attract a diverse range of participants to the project, in the contexts of their prior criminal labour exploitation, in demographic terms, and also in experiences of a range of supports, and of justice and remedy.

The project was successful in engaging a particularly diverse group of people given their small number, to be representative of a range of exploitation settings for the purposes of providing voice to government.

Participants joining the project had experienced the following contexts of modern slavery:

2	<i>Exploitation in private domestic work</i>
1	<i>Exploitation in diplomatic domestic work</i>
2	<i>Exploitation in sex work industry</i>
1	<i>Exploitation in Agricultural industry</i>

The group comprised of people from at least 6 culture and language groups.

Two participants identified as men, four as women.

The ages of participants ranged from mid-twenties to sixty years old.

The practical support offered to participants included:

- an honorarium for preparation and participation in SAC meetings
- travel and accommodation for interstate meetings
- interpreters as required.
- payment for childcare if needed to attend meetings.
- Assistance to access legal advice if needed.
- Free support from the program psychologist.

The program also provided e-gift vouchers as tokens of appreciation for participation in monitoring and evaluation interviews, and for formalised training.

### Reflections and future recommendations

From experience and feedback, investigating alternative approaches to traditional risk assessment in supporting lived experience advocacy would be helpful. A move towards centring survivor agency and elements of self-assessment will support survivors to do this work.



“

*When we all share our experiences, a common solution emerges.*

## SECTION 6-BUILDING A GROUP

The group undertook group formation activities in October 2022 including developing group agreements for a safer space to work together.

Several people in the program had prior experience of survivor advocacy, mainly as individual survivors in partnership with NGOs or as participants in the prior TSA Freedom Advocates program. This entailed training, support and experience in the public eye, including television stories. It was an entirely new experience to be invited to come together into a collective of like-minded change-makers.

The greatest challenge was in finding mutually available times to meet. This was due to the everyday lives of participants, including employment as shift workers, their family responsibilities, and study timetables. Therefore, the program responded flexibly to the availability and needs of participants. This meant that for much of the project, people met online as 2 groups, an afternoon and an evening group. Connections between the groups were formed by exchanging video messages, and eventually meeting in person for the first time in December 2022 in Canberra. There were further opportunities for face-to-face meetings over the course of the project.

Throughout the program the group met for non-SAC specific purposes on 18 occasions for each group. Generally meetings were 2 hours in length.

The program drew on all 6 LEEP participants to form the inaugural SAC. As direct government consultation with survivors is in its infancy in Australia, this was necessary for the first LEEP iteration.

### Reflections and future recommendations

Connection with peers was identified as another key outcome of victim-survivors' engagement in the LEEP. From baseline to mid-point review, LEEP team members reflected on their commitment to support victim-survivors to seek social support and draw on the collective strength of the group. At midpoint review, they had already seen victim-survivors demonstrate increased social connectedness. At exit, LEEP team members reflected on the opportunities that had grown from victim-survivors participating in the LEEP. Even at baseline, a participants expressed the following:

*"...If we can give LEEP a bit more time...having to mobilize people, get their feedback, and give them enough time to create that bond that's needed for a group...to work...I think one year...the timeframe we were given is not really enough...So I think maybe...more time in the future. If we get more time that would be really nice to...do activities and create that bond as a group to work effectively."*

(LEEP Participant at baseline).

## SECTION 7-BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS AND ENGAGING WITH GOVERNMENT

Building relationships and ensuring empowerment the literature suggests that effective victim survivor engagement requires the foundations of strong, transparent and genuine relationships (Clayson, Webb & Cox, 2018). *"These relationships should be afforded adequate time to build."* (Vidal, L., 2021 *Lived Experience Engagement: A review of the literature and best-practice models*. Laura Emily Consultancy, Sydney, Australia).

It is important to acknowledge that a collegial and collaborative relationship between the LEEP team, the AGD team, and the SAC was an essential element in achieving success. LEEP staff worked collaboratively with staff from AGD Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Branch. Combined, these teams planned engagements that maximised positive outcomes for survivors and met the needs of government, and minimised possible negative effects. This was done with a shared awareness that a relational approach rather than a transactional approach was preferable.

In collaboration with the AGD a consultation schedule and topics were created for 5 consultations throughout 2023, as well as presentations for at the National Slavery Conference.

Early relationship-building consisted of the following:

**Biographies.** The sharing of brief SAC member biographies to the relevant government representatives. SAC members were supported to write about themselves for the purpose of engagement.

**Briefing.** In December 2022, the Program Manager provided an online briefing session with a range of government representatives, introducing the program and discussing what to expect from survivor engagements.

**Meeting with the Attorney General.** Associated with the opportunity to be guest speakers at the Ministerial Meeting of the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery, five of the six members of SAC met online with the Attorney General of Australia.

**Engagement 1.** An initial engagement with government representatives also took place in Canberra (see list of consultation engagements below)

**SAC presentations to Roundtable attendees.** Three of the six SAC members presented at the National Roundtable about survivor voice and leadership. In this presentation, the SAC members shared their personal and group aspirations for positive change by being active in the antislavery movement.



*Recovery would mean seeing our recommendations in policy.*

## Overview of Engagement sessions

### Engagement Session 1 (December 2022).

SAC members met in person with government representatives from AFP, AGD, DEWR, FWO, Education and DSS in Canberra. In this meeting SAC members hosted government representatives, introduced themselves and all shared their areas of interest and expertise. Survivors provided initial advice on engagement etiquette.

### Engagement Session 2 (February 2023)

The targeted review of Divisions 270 and 271 of the Criminal Code Act 1995; and the review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018 (online).

### Engagement Session 3 (April 2023)

Awareness Raising and Training Frontline Officials (online).

### Engagement Session 4 (May 2023)

Support and Empowerment (including providing advice about the National Modern Slavery Conference). In person in Sydney.

### Engagement Session 5 (August 2023)

Remediation and Practical Support (online).

## Government representatives in engagement

The staff coordinated and Policy Officer from the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Branch at AGD coordinated and briefed government representatives utilising the Lived Experience Engagement Program (LEEP) – Government Engagement document was a precursor to a future, more formalised terms of reference. It was accompanied by a draft terms of engagement. As the program learned through experience, these learnings were noted and incorporated into proceedings.

In coordinating the schedule of engagements within government, it was identified that internal staff would benefit from trauma informed training, and this was addressed.

There were six government department representatives participating in Engagement Session 1 (AFP, AGD, DEWR, FWO, Education and DSS) in Canberra.

Overall, there were twenty-five attendees from Government across Engagement Sessions two to five. Some were repeat attendees. Six government departments were represented.

## SAC preparation for engagements

The group completed a training “Working with Government” conducted by the TSA Responsible Sourcing Manager and National Contact Point - Modern Slavery over several weeks in November 2022, to learn about the Australian Government, key departments and Ministers and methods of influence.

This training was completed with a tour of Parliament House in December 2022. Communications and media messaging training was conducted in January 2022 to support survivors' skills to define their objectives in messaging, craft content, deliver, respond to questions, and manage media requests.

For each regular consultation with government, up to six hours of group preparation was facilitated by the Project Officer with the Program Manager often in attendance. Most members required some individual meetings to hone their language and messaging skills, and emotional support as required. These preparatory sessions considered how knowledge gathered from personal experiences can be utilised 'safely' and 'bravely' to inform and advise government representatives. There were many conversations during LEEP and SAC meetings about the limitations of declarations of 'safe spaces' and the more contemporary progression to 'brave spaces' favoured by most participants.

### Co-designing SAC engagements

Each scheduled engagement allowed for up to 3 hours to complete the consultation and to reflect together at the conclusion.

While the design of the program itself was founded on well-researched principles and framework, most of the deliverables were designed to be responsive and flexible. There was space held for survivors to direct how they wanted to engage. This included an appraisal of consultation topics and questions provided by government, to assess their own expertise and capabilities to respond. The consultation agenda was then suggested by the SAC and the Project Officer and further developed with reference to the needs of government. An evolving structure to each engagement emerged from reflections and debriefing on previous engagements and the priority interests, strengths and wellbeing of members.

**Engagement 1.** SAC Members designed this engagement with the support of the LEEP team. Features of this engagement were an SAC member and LEEP staff Q&A to provide insights into interacting with survivors, and a casual afternoon tea. There was time for a couple of questions from government representatives.

**Engagement 2.** Consultation on the reviews of legislation. This topic was naturally challenging. With insights from experiences from session1, SAC members designed the session to maximise their control of how they addressed the consultation topics to offer meaningful contributions. This formed presentation style information sharing, with follow-up questions from government that were led by 1 representative, to avoid overwhelm. Several government representatives attended as observers.

**Engagement 3.** This session trialled a freer style of engagement based on a panel style, where the SAC and the project facilitator designed and participated in a prepared question and answer session to address the topic and questions, and follow-up questions were asked by government.

**Engagement 4.** For this session, in which 2 AGD representatives with responsibility for the NAP Action Item 31, Develop a Victim and Survivor Engagement and Empowerment Strategy was held in person in Sydney. With this capacity a brainstorm format was devised, though the usual preparation methods were followed.

**Engagement 5.** This final engagement again used a panel style format for the session. The Project Officer continued their role in supporting people to find their focus and craft their contributions, and as the panel facilitator, supported people to move through their topics in the manner SAC members had planned. By the fourth session, SAC members and the lead representatives from the AGD had developed a good rapport, enhanced by meeting face to face. By the fifth session most SAC members had become quite confident in their abilities to contribute, and some members required less preparation time to be able to participate meaningfully.

The Survivor Advisory Council's work with Government resulted in written guidance related to effective identification, response and support for survivors of criminal labour exploitation for Government and key stakeholders. This guidance was in the form of consultation summaries written by AGD staff and reviewed by the SAC members for edits and approval. These were released as sensitive documents to Government representatives.

More guidance was provided by the SAC in video form containing practice advice to allies and encouragement to other victim survivors.

Consultation 3 specifically focussed on best practice for survivor inclusion at the National Modern Slavery Conference, and for the development of the Victim and Survivor Engagement and Empowerment Strategy. With the program now rolling into a new grant round, the SAC can continue to advise the AGD on best practice engagement.

### Reflections and future recommendations

The new SAC role was necessarily identified in the LEEP framework as providing feedback and advice on existing initiatives and new initiatives. However this did not restrict the methodology or style of consultation. Through their openness to be guided by the SAC and LEEP staff, the AGD staff greatly enhanced the empowerment of people with lived experience in roles such as the SAC. In survivor engagement, there are many opportunities for survivor leadership and decision-making.

Not every engagement activity can or should be co-designed or co-produced, however incorporating principles of co-design in aspects of all engagements is a viable option. This provides greater control for survivors in constructing how they wish to engage, and greater safety within the engagement.

For successful work together the time spent in preparation is capacity-building, empowering and supports meaningful experiences for all parties.

The SAC has been operating under an explanatory document incorporating the purpose of the SAC consultations and the schedule of engagements. It also has a draft terms of engagement that speaks to the spirit of the engagements. Both of these should be updated and formalised for future iterations.

Future iterations of the LEEP would do well to be resourced for greater peer connections and development running alongside the SAC. Dedicated time and space, with facilitation, will greatly support individuals, the development of collective consciousness, and the sustainability of initiatives like the SAC.

The LEEP pilot has demonstrated that direct voice is a viable platform. The ongoing status of the Council and the access to development and support to perform the role of Council member are necessary to sustain it.



## SECTION 8-ENGAGING WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS

The additional opportunities negotiated during the LEEP enabled further experience and influence of survivors in antislavery responses across a wide range of stakeholders.

### **Ministerials Meeting of the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery (the Roundtable)**

The Roundtable is the primary way civil society and Government officially interact. Approximately 50-60 people attended the Roundtable in December 2022, and heard directly from survivors as they entered their journeys with the LEEP. Members of the National Roundtable have watched and listened to the progress of the LEEP and the SAC from that first engagement. Feedback from their presence and presentations was very positive and helped set in motion additional opportunities for SAC members to contribute effectively in the movement, including a presentation with an NGO on experiences of being a survivor active in changemaking.

### **National Modern Slavery Conference, June 2023.**

This conference was hosted by the AGD, in partnership with the Australian Institute of Criminology.

The theme of the conference was 'Taking Action Together,' reflecting the importance of collaborative modern slavery responses. The conference brought speakers and stakeholders together from government, business, civil society, academia and survivors to bolster cross-sector collaboration on modern slavery responses.

Along with international survivor leaders Sophie Otiende and Rani Hong, the Survivor Advisory Council was invited to attend and to play prominent roles on the conference program. They brought into sharp focus the benefits of survivor leadership in antislavery responses. It was remarked that their roles had changed the landscape for all work from that time onwards.

Approximately five hundred delegates attended in person or online. Additional to the program, SAC members were invited to share their experiences with senior government representatives from Governments of Cambodia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.

### **Reflections and future recommendations**

The original remuneration schedule proved limited in its scope for the activities and the roles the LEEP and SAC members eventually performed.

The Survivor Advisory Council's participation and presentation at the 2022 Ministerial Meeting of the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery was impactful and included insightful contribution on key issues from survivors' perspectives. Further opportunities for survivors to work in partnership with government and civil society are needed to utilise these forums as the expert consultation spaces.

## SECTION 9-UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES

### The power of peer connection and survivor initiative

LEEP brought people with lived experience together in ways that were novel to them. Meeting like-minded people brought shared experiences to the fore and exposed elements of support they had previously not been able to access. These conversations fired up desires to be actively providing solutions that are survivor-driven. Independent from the LEEP, two participants worked together to create a survivor-focussed website providing information about modern slavery in ways that are meaningful to victims and survivors. They started up survivor support groups and as mentioned in the forward/introduction, are stepping through the processes to formalise their association so they can move forward with their aims and goals.

### The power of opportunity

Without belief in the potential of survivors, few opportunities are extended that could become life-changing. Participation in the LEEP has created visibility for survivors who are in a position to be public-facing, and opportunities to connect with a wide range of antislavery professionals. This can and has resulted in employment opportunities, furthering partnerships in change-making goals. Many more connections and opportunities can and should be extended, not only in advocacy-related roles, but in any role where survivors may work with their strengths and interests. Opportunity often leads to more opportunities, in turn supporting an increased value of survivor expertise, employment pathways, healing and recovery, and access to a form of justice.



“

*Don't give up.  
Chase your  
dream. You are  
not too small!!*

### Reflections and future recommendations

Enhancing partnerships within the anti-slavery sector can provide support to survivors to participate in many forms of engagement. Investigate providing infrastructure support if desired by emergent groups as they establish themselves.

The freedom to work, and the power it can return to survivors means moving forward with their lives. This may be within antislavery work or elsewhere.

### The Salvation Army's Trafficking and Slavery Safe House and Live Experience Engagement Program

The Salvation Army established the Trafficking and Slavery Safe House in 2008, Australia's first and only accommodation service in Australia specifically for adult women who have experienced human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices. The Safe House supports approximately 30-35 survivors and their dependents each year with flexible and holistic case management, either through its supported accommodation service (for adult cisgender and transgender women), transitional housing or non-residential support (for all ages and genders).

Located in Sydney, the Safe House accepts nation-wide referrals from a range of sources including health, education, law enforcement, legal services and community-based organisations. The Safe House client group's experiences of exploitation vary widely across the spectrum of modern slavery offences, but typically include:

- Survivors of domestic servitude, including in private households and diplomatic residences.
- Survivors of a forced marriage or those at risk of a forced marriage (typically young women).
- Survivors of sex trafficking and sexual exploitation in commercial or private settings.
- Trafficking and forced labour in other industries, including but not limited to agriculture.
- construction, personal/aged care, hospitality and tourism.
- Survivors of exit trafficking and attempted trafficking.

The majority of the people the Safe House assists are migrants, with the cohort including temporary visa holders, international students, asylum seekers and refugees. Australian permanent residents and citizens are also represented in the cohort the Safe House supports, particularly those who have experienced or are at risk of forced marriage, and people who have experienced sexual exploitation and domestic sex trafficking.

Linking with other services, the Safe House supports survivors to meet their immediate and long-term needs, in order for them to become independent and seek justice. Funded by the Australian Government's National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020-25 Grant Program, The Salvation Army also delivers the Lived Experience Engagement Program (LEEP) to empower survivors of criminal labour exploitation to use their lived expertise to inform positive change. Survivor Advisory Council members commenced their engagement and consultation with the Australian Government in December 2022.

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# APPENDIX

## LEEP Monitoring and Evaluation Summary of Findings

### Purpose

This report summarises evaluation findings (i.e., outcomes arising from data collection and evaluation) from baseline to exit, for the first iteration of the Lived Experience Engagement Program (LEEP, 2022-2023). The M&E framework was adaptive. Feedback was sought from victim-survivors (participants), LEEP team members and Government representatives at (1) baseline, (2) mid-point, and (3) exit. Feedback was integrated into the survivor engagement model at each data collection interval.

The Research team utilised a representative participatory approach in conducting M&E for this program. Participatory approaches are not about a single method but a strategy of monitoring and evaluation that is meaningful to stakeholders—most importantly, victim-survivors or lived experience engagement participants. Participatory approaches are ideal for evaluating emerging programs, as they incorporate learnings derived from carefully selected qualitative and/or quantitative data collection and analytical methods.

### Methodology

In consideration of the total participant numbers ( $N < 10$  for each cohort), the evaluation used qualitative research methodology to address key evaluation questions. The M&E framework was structured to incorporate two inter-related but distinctive components:

- Impact evaluation

- Identify and assess program effectiveness in meeting LEEP model aims – e.g., impact of LEEP on participants' outcomes.
- Assessed in relation to program input and resources available.

- Process evaluation

- Determine whether program activities have been implemented as intended and produced certain outputs.
- Evaluate the efficacy of governance and staffing structure, activity planning and operations of LEEP throughout its lifespan. Information gathered will provide important details surrounding program replication and lessons learnt, and guide future development of lived experience engagement models.

Baseline data collection was conducted within two months of project commencement. Mid-point data collection was conducted as close to the mid-point of the LEEP rollout as possible. End-point data collection was conducted in the final month of the LEEP rollout.

## Monitoring and evaluation key findings

Here we detail key findings, as per the key overarching evaluation questions, including:

- Individual and system level outcomes arising from the program, including:
  - Movement from lived experience to lived expertise
  - Confidence
  - Peer connection
  - Knowledge and skill development
  
- Efficacy of the LEEP and SAC model in meeting program aims and in attaining significant outcomes across the lifespan of the program

To best protect their privacy, all participants' identifying information has been removed and participant quotes are used sparingly.

### Movement from lived experience to lived expertise

Victim-survivors involved in the LEEP monitoring and evaluation interviews described a process of transition from owning their experience as a “victim” or “survivor”, to becoming an expert (i.e., lived expertise). At each data collection timepoint (baseline, mid-point and endpoint), participants (n = 61) were asked about what they had learnt throughout their engagement with the LEEP. By endpoint, participants (n = 5) reiterated an acknowledgement of the diversity of the groups' lived experience (three participants), the importance of government engagement (two participants) and sharing their knowledge with other victim survivors (one participant). One participant also recognised sharing their expertise was pivotal for providing accurate insight into the lived experience of victim survivors and for dispelling any misconceptions about modern slavery and human/sex trafficking.

“...I've also noticed the importance of involving or including survivors in these spaces because I realised...a lot of people do not understand these issues, and unless you have the lived experience then you see these things differently.”

In recognition of the above transition from lived experience to lived expertise, government representatives identified from baseline to end-point that their learnings included understanding the importance of victim-survivors' voices and incorporating lived experience into policy. Likewise, LEEP team members (i.e., Salvation Army personnel) described from baseline to end-point their commitment to empower and raise the profile of victim-survivors and their lived experience.

### Confidence

Victim-survivor participants also reflected on an increase in confidence because of participating in the LEEP. By midpoint, all participants (n = 5) had already reported an increase in their confidence. By endpoint, they all agreed their overall engagement in the program resulted in an increase in their confidence to be effective

survivor advocates Participants suggested what helped develop their confidence was:

- Learning to embrace/take ownership of their experience and utilise their expertise as a survivor advocate
- Having the opportunity to rehearse before speaking publicly
- Opportunities to speak publicly to relevant government representatives
- Peer-to-peer support among the LEEP participants
- Ongoing support from the LEEP staff
- Unconditional support among the LEEP participants
- Specific tasks which helped the participants to overcome feelings of guilt and shame about their lived experience
- Ongoing guidance and support from the LEEP leaders
- Skills gained through their participation in the LEEP

*“Before I used to...advocate a lot in survivor spaces, but I couldn't share my story; I was so embarrassed, I was still ashamed of what happened and I...was taking it on me, so I think LEEP has helped me in being more proud now and being able to share my story because I found other people who have a similar experience and a similar story. So, then it's that the guilt is now gone, and that shame is gone, and that was totally [the] LEEP.”*

This was also evidenced by LEEP team members. At mid-point review, they reported having already witnessed victim-survivors demonstrate increased confidence and ability to reflect on their individual experience whilst understanding broader systemic experiences, and this was further reflected at exit.

### **Peer connection**

Connection with peers was identified as another key outcome of victim-survivors' engagement in the LEEP. By endpoint, all participants (n = 5) indicated their social connections had further evolved, with some (two participants) describing their relationships as akin to family. Two participants also acknowledged the pivotal role their connections played in their personal healing journeys and their effectiveness as survivor advocates. As a testament to the importance of peer-to-peer networking among victim-survivors, two participants jointly initiated the formation of a survivor network.

*“It's like a family. We...don't have to feel shame. Don't be scared...or don't feel shy, we can just share...things... We know we [are] all the same...we are not different, so for me is everything and we look at everything the same. We don't look at this...colour, whatever everyone is saying, and we understand, we know what happened to me, I know what happened to them...so you are like one another, and happy to share things, you know?”*

In support of this, from baseline to mid-point review, LEEP team members highlighted peer connection as significant:

Without peer-to-peer engagement and leadership, victims and survivors are isolated and powerless victims or restricted to remaining beneficiaries of services only.

## Knowledge and skill development

Finally, the LEEP instilled in victim-survivors the necessary knowledge and skills required for survivor advocacy work. When participants (n = 4) were asked about their skills at baseline, they reported varying levels of advocacy skills from unskilled (one participant) to skilled (three participants). For those who reported being skilled, two attributed their skills to previous survivor advocacy work and one suggested their skills were a direct result of their experience of modern slavery.

By endpoint, participants (n = 5) indicated their participation in the LEEP provided them with the necessary skills to be effective survivor-advocates. Participants reported their success was attributable to the following:

- The structure and the delivery of the LEEP
- Their improved understanding and application of the English language
- Ongoing guidance and support from LEEP team members
- Opportunities to consult with government
- Specific LEEP tasks which helped participants to take ownership of their experience or highlighted their expertise as survivor advocates

*“When I started, I had no idea what I was doing whatsoever, as [LEEP team member] would have said I was just winging it, I was just, you know, jumping at any opportunity I had throwing myself into any...opportunity that sort of came my way. Whether I knew what I was doing or not, and so I think LEEP has given me a much more formal structure and support to learn how to do the things.”*

LEEP team members also had similar reflections. At exit, they suggested the LEEP was successful in providing opportunities for professional development, growth, and increased confidence of victim-survivors, with some going on to secure further work and pursue additional advocacy opportunities.

## Future Considerations

Across the three cohorts of participants (victim-survivors, LEEP team members, and Government representatives), there was recognition that the goals and aims of the LEEP had been achieved.

### Staff perspectives

At exit, Government representatives and LEEP team members asserted that the deliverables had been met. Government representatives and LEEP team members also suggested that the LEEP had an impact on their own professional learning and practice.

I am also very mindful now of making space as an ally - we need to do more listening, supporting, and working alongside survivors in this sector if we truly want to see it become an effective survivor-led movement.

### Importance of the program

All victim-survivor participants (n = 5) expressed the importance of engaging victim-survivors as subject matter experts and highlighted that without their participation, the following would be overlooked:

- Perspective from the victim-survivors lived experience of modern slavery and human/sex trafficking
- Insight into the diversity of lived experience among victim-survivors; without this insight, individualised needs of victim-survivors cannot be fully addressed
- Understanding how paternalistic attitudes can negatively impact victim-survivors. For example, these attitudes can restrict autonomy by making decisions for victim-survivors and put them at risk of being retraumatised by inadvertently rekindling feelings of vulnerability and helplessness
- Suggestions on how to reduce the incidence of modern slavery and human/sex trafficking
- Opportunities for peer-to-peer connections and networking

At endpoint, Government representatives reflected on opportunities for growth when engaging with victim survivor advocates. They described how the Survivor Advisory Council played a key role in pieces of work led by the Commonwealth, including review of the Modern Slavery Act and the Targeted Review of the Modern Slavery offences in the Criminal Code, as well as development of guidance to support a successful national modern slavery conference. They also noted that advice received from the council members informed the direction of major policy thinking on support and empowerment, remediation and practical support, awareness-raising and training frontline officials. Reflections on monitoring and evaluation framework

One of our key evaluation questions was: how can we build an M&E framework that provides timely feedback for LEEP and SAC modifications, modelling best practice victim-survivor participation?

Review of the LEEP model (Vidal, 2022) and initial discussions with TSA's Trafficking and Slavery Safe House identified several aspirations or key goals relevant to the program's M&E Framework:

1. Evaluation findings (i.e., outcomes arising from data collection and evaluation at various time points) were to be continuously integrated into the survivor engagement model. Therefore, the framework was adaptive while also providing structure to the overall process.
2. Inclusiveness was an important factor in model design and there was a strong desire to be as inclusive as feasible of all program stakeholders—victim-survivors, program facilitators and government representatives—in the design and implementation stages of the M&E framework.
3. While Participatory Action Research was deemed a worthwhile approach, the team acknowledged that its complete implementation would be too resource intensive and required significant training of all stakeholders prior to execution (e.g., training victim-survivors to be able to evaluate the program that they are developing through LEEP). Hence, a **representative participatory approach** was employed in conducting M&E for this program.

Utilising a **representative participatory approach** offered victim-survivors the opportunity to influence and shape the LEEP and its management. Victim-survivors were given a voice in determining their own



development. For example, as part of their interviews (at baseline and midpoint), they were invited to identify lessons learned and determine appropriate action steps for program improvement. Lessons learned were then incorporated into concurrent program development.

This approach was successful in ensuring sustainability and fairness – facilitating partnerships and equity with the people the LEEP serves. In future program iterations, pending resourcing, it would be advisable to seek participant contributions about potential evaluation measures (i.e., indicator development) informed by their experiences with LEEP, thereby shaping monitoring and evaluation methodology through a lived experience lens.





