

Ghosts in the System – Thousands Living in Sexual Servitude, Forced Marriage and Forced Labour in Australia

FIVERS FOR SURVIVORS DAY – OCTOBER 16TH 2019

9th September 2019 - No identity, and therefore no ability to get medical treatment or official help, Charlotte* lived in sexual servitude and slavery, fearing for her life every day for 12 years.

This is not a story from hundreds of years ago. It's not something that occurred in a far-off country. It happened right here, in Australia, in 2019.

Official estimates state that 15,000** people currently live in circumstances of slavery within Australia – this includes victims of human trafficking, forced labour, forced marriage and forced sexual exploitation – however Sally Irwin, founder of Freedom Hub, believes actual figures could be much higher. Fivers for Survivors Day, held this year on October 16th, is calling on businesses, schools, clubs and individuals to give just \$5 to help survivors of slavery in Australia rebuild their lives.

“There are thousands of people in Australia who are effectively ghosts in the system. Official statistics often can't capture them because they essentially 'don't exist'; their identities have been stolen from them, passports taken, all means of communication cut off. Without the ability to access assistance or services they are trapped in slavery living in abhorrent circumstances,” said Irwin.

Irwin's organisation, Freedom Hub, is a For Purpose enterprise that works to provide after-care services for survivors of modern slavery in Australia.

“Once the survivor is removed from the situation of slavery there is still so much more that needs to be done for them. Our Survivor School helps them reintegrate into society, build a life for themselves and overcome their trauma to really thrive,” Irwin said.

Shardi* came to Australia in 2016 as a slave with the family that 'owned' her. Unpaid, over worked and verbally abused, after 14 months she found an opportunity to run and escaped with nothing but the clothes she was wearing. Freedom Hub helped provide Shardi with clothing, accommodation and food, along with Survivor School classes to help her rebuild her life. She now dreams of using her passion and skills to become a chef.

Freedom Hub's Survivor School has helped over 70 survivors like Charlotte and Shardi, a process which can take years and cost up to \$20,000 per person. Survivor School provides work-ready courses, including basic employment and office skills, practical applications for success and paid work experience. The school also provides peer support and long-term support, including outings, workshops, employment help and tutoring.

“This Fivers for Survivors Day we're asking people to come together to give a small donation so that jointly we can make a massive difference. Whether it's a morning tea in the office, drinks after work or a collection amongst your friends, mobilise your network and help make an impact in the

lives of modern slavery survivors like Charlotte and Shardi for as little as \$5," said Irwin.

As a For Purpose business every cent donated through Fivers for Survivors Day goes straight to Freedom Hub's Survivor School program, directly benefitting individual survivors.

Fivers for Survivors Day seeks to raise awareness of the issue and occurrence of modern slavery in Australia, as well as much-needed funds to support survivors. Fivers for Survivors Day is on the 16th October and asks businesses, clubs, schools, groups and anyone who would like to be part of the day to donate just \$5. Donations can be made at <https://thefreedomhub.org/fivers-for-survivors/>. All donations are tax deductible.

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For more information, or to arrange an interview with Sally Irwin, please contact:

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About Freedom Hub:

The Freedom Hub Venue, Cafe and School is a registered charity with a mission to rehabilitate and empower victims of human trafficking and slavery like practices in Australia. Freedom Hub's SURVIVOR SCHOOL runs free classes to help survivors regain confidence and become work ready. It's cafés in Sydney and the Gold Coast are "businesses for purpose" to provide profit to sustain the School.

To register your support and receive a resource and media kit please email: fivers4survivors@thefreedomhub.org

*Names have been changed to protect individuals' identity

**Global Slavery Index 2018

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