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## MEDIA RELEASE

### Women on temporary visas experiencing family violence face additional complex barriers to seeking help

CEO of inTouch, Ms Michal Morris, today released a position paper on women on temporary visas who are experiencing family violence. The paper urges the government to implement eight recommendations in order to improve supports and services for these vulnerable women.

'I believe that all women who experience family violence in Australia should have access to the full suite of support services and be safe. Visa status should not be a factor, nor should living in destitution. Today, the government is issuing more temporary visas than ever before. Because of this we are only going to see more women in need and more gaps in services', said Ms Morris.

In 2018–19 over 8.8 million temporary visas were granted to eligible people to come to Australia. While the majority of people will not experience harm, some will. Ms Morris said that approximately 40% of inTouch clients in 2018-19 were on temporary visas.

'We work with women on temporary visas every day and we see the multiple and varying layers of disadvantage they experience. The added barriers they face are impacting their ability to get the help they need and most importantly, to keep themselves and their family safe'.

Aish, a member of inTouch's Inspire for Change victim-survivor advisory group, was on a temporary visa when she experienced family violence. Her husband used her temporary migration status as a form of power, to control every aspect of her life.

'For two years I felt trapped. I was told I couldn't work and I could barely leave the house. He told me that I had to be careful as everything I did could impact whether I would stay in the country or not. I didn't know any different as I was new to Australia, and I trusted that he was telling me the truth. Even when I tried to find out more about my visa, I couldn't as he kept changing the Wi-Fi password. There was no other way to find out what my rights were, I was socially isolated and had no one else to talk to', said Aish.

inTouch CEO, Ms Morris, added that 'For many women on partner visas who are experiencing family violence, they do not have the option to safely return to their home country due to the stigma associated with the breakdown of the relationship. In many communities, this stigma can place the woman in further danger – she may be ostracised by her own community, and there may be threats of retaliation towards her and her family from her partner and his family'.

Issues highlighted in the position paper include:

- temporary migration status being used as a tool for coercion and control by perpetrators
- an individual's visa status limiting access to basic services including health or community services, working rights, and social security
- additional risks faced by women in regional and rural areas when they cannot flee to safety outside of the region designated to them through their visa.

The position paper can be read [here](#) and a two page summary is also available [here](#).

Read more about Aish's experience being on a temporary visa [here](#). Her full story can be read on the inTouch [website](#).

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