

# Self-reflective guide

## Labour exploitation

### Overview

This theme uses a video-based approach to unpack the differences between poor work practices and forced labour. You are encouraged to select a total of three videos: one introductory video, one video from the 'Poor Work Practices' category, and one from the 'Forced Labour' category for a balanced session. You can mix and match videos based on your preference.

### How to watch the video

- Play the three videos (introduction, one poor work practices video, and one forced labour video) as three parts (scenes).
- After the end of each video, you can either pause to reflect on the questions provided or watch all three videos before reflecting on the questions.
- Total session time: 15-20 mins

**Please note that each video has some unique aspects that you can reflect upon:**

- **Food Delivery (Unaccounted Miles)**  
ABN and what it means to work with an ABN.
- **Factory Worker (Keeping our Heads down)**  
No access to unions or legal information, and safety equipment.
- **Waiter (You Are Welcome)**  
Work references and how that works.
- **Sex Work (In Hope of Freedom)**  
Sex work is legal in Australia and challenging some of the assumptions around stigma and victim-blaming.
- **Farm (We Trusted Him)**  
Co-ethnic exploitation and child labour.
- **Cleaning (In Search of a Better Future)**  
Sponsorship deduction and the risks of students being exploited in Australia.



### Objectives

- Recognise the signs of labour exploitation.
- Differentiate between poor work practices and forced labour.
- Understand workers' rights regardless of visa status.
- Promote reflection and awareness about work exploitation and forced labour.

### Definition: forced labour

When a person does not consider themselves free to stop working or to leave their place of work because of coercion, threat or deception.

### Introduction

Labour exploitation happens when people work in unfair, unsafe, or illegal conditions. It ranges from poor work practices to forced labour, where individuals cannot leave due to threats or control.

 **Labour Exploitation Introduction:**  
[youtu.be/6FzvNQKLf0E](https://youtu.be/6FzvNQKLf0E)  
(watch the video)

# Self-reflective guide

## Labour exploitation

### Scene 1: Scenes from different workplaces

#### Summary:

Footage of various industries where exploitation may occur.

#### Q 1: Have you ever witnessed unfair treatment in the workplace?

##### How did it make you feel?

#### Reflection:

Think about a job that you held and about what made it bad or good. Were your rights and entitlements respected?

#### Q 2: Did you have a choice to leave that job if you wanted to?

#### Reflection:

How hard was it for you to decide on changing employers? Reflect on the barriers and ultimately whether you had the choice to leave the employment if you wanted to.

---

### Scene 2: Poor work practices (Choose one)

#### Waiter (You Are Welcome) [youtu.be/OhiqSO0nbXk](https://youtu.be/OhiqSO0nbXk)

*At the time this video was made, the minimum pay was \$24.10. Please check the Fair Work Ombudsman website for the most current information.*

#### Factory (Keeping Our Heads Down): [youtu.be/QDOR3jETLao](https://youtu.be/QDOR3jETLao)

#### Food Delivery (Unaccounted Miles): [youtu.be/NgZyx8kgerA](https://youtu.be/NgZyx8kgerA)

#### Summary:

A waiter is underpaid in a restaurant, a factory worker is afraid of losing her job, a delivery driver is struggling with low pay.

#### Q 1: How are people drawn into exploitative work?

#### Reflection:

Cash-in-hand payments, visa status (depending upon the visa there might be limitations), no local experience, family responsibilities and pressure to send money home, someone from one's own community, language barriers.

*Here you can reflect on cash-in-hand payments, superannuation and the importance of superannuation. What is your understanding around cash-in-hand payments – are they legal?*

*In Australia paying wages in cash is legal. If paying wages in cash employers must comply with all the employment laws which includes providing accurate payslips, paying superannuation, and withholding the correct amount of tax.*

*Visit the Australian Taxation Office website to learn more:*

# Self-reflective guide

## Labour exploitation

[ato.gov.au/individuals-and-families/jobs-and-employment-types/working-as-an-employee/receiving-cash-for-work-you-do](https://ato.gov.au/individuals-and-families/jobs-and-employment-types/working-as-an-employee/receiving-cash-for-work-you-do)

### Q 2: What are some unfair and unsafe work practices shown in this story?

#### Reflection:

Underpayment of wages, long work hours, no payslips, no contract, no penalty for working overtime, no safety equipment, and an abusive workplace.

*What is being paid a minimum wage?  
Does it matter if a contract has not been signed?*

*Look up 'Fair Work' to see the most current minimum wage and industry awards as this is subject to change. It does not matter if a contract has been signed. All employees are automatically covered by the National Employment Standard regardless of whether they signed a contract. Visit the Fair Work Ombudsman website to learn more: [fairwork.gov.au/employment-conditions/contracts#:~:text=All%20employees%20are%20covered%20by,than%20their%20minimum%20legal%20entitlements](https://fairwork.gov.au/employment-conditions/contracts#:~:text=All%20employees%20are%20covered%20by,than%20their%20minimum%20legal%20entitlements)*

---

## Scene 3: Forced labour (choose one)

 **Farm (We Trusted Him)**  
[youtu.be/UN71a39w1Rs](https://youtu.be/UN71a39w1Rs)

 **Cleaning (In Search of a Better Future)**  
[youtu.be/maWUWikDI2M](https://youtu.be/maWUWikDI2M)

 **Sex Work (In Hope of Freedom)**  
[youtu.be/o9zsqu2TPGw](https://youtu.be/o9zsqu2TPGw)

### Summary:

Three stories: cleaning, sex work, and farm work reveal deeper control, visa threats, and abuse.

### Q 1: What are some forms of abuse you can identify in this story?

#### Reflection:

Cash-in-hand payments, long hours without breaks, threats to report to immigration, passport seized by employer, little or no personal freedom, deception, no payment, under payment, abusive working and living conditions, co-ethnic exploitation, and sponsorship deductions.

*Wage theft is the deliberate underpayment or non-payment of wages or entitlements by an employer. There are legal services that can help with this.*

### **In January 2025 intentional underpayment of wages became a criminal offence.**

*Visit the Fair Work Ombudsman website to learn more: [fairwork.gov.au/about-us/workplace-laws/legislation-changes/closing-loopholes/criminalising-wage-underpayments-and-other-issues](https://fairwork.gov.au/about-us/workplace-laws/legislation-changes/closing-loopholes/criminalising-wage-underpayments-and-other-issues)*

*You have **six years** from the date of the underpayment to put in an application to recover unpaid wages. Fair Work has a **Record My Hours** app which you can*

# Self-reflective guide

## Labour exploitation

*download on your smartphone to keep a record of the hours worked.*

**Q 2: What is stopping the person in this story from leaving their job, and how is this situation different from just having a bad job?**

**Reflection:**

Fear of deportation, hope of a permanent visa, threats made by the employer, passport seized by the employer, not knowing their rights, restricted movement, debts, isolation, visa status (restrictions on visas creates vulnerabilities), language barriers, being misled about their rights.

Forced labour is not just about having a bad job. It is about a person not having choice and control over their situation. People in forced labour situations do not have a choice but to continue working for the employer due to threat, deception, and coercion. A person's freedom and choice get taken away and whether the threat is actual or perceived the person believes that he/she has no choice but to continue working for the employer.

---

### Additional reflection questions (optional)

- What have I learned about power, control, and human rights?
  - How can I use this knowledge to support others or raise awareness in my community?
  - Who can I talk to if I see or suspect a situation of forced labour?
- 

### What does the law say

- Forced labour is a criminal offence under Australian law, penalties can include imprisonment of up to 12 years.
- Workers have legal protections regardless of their visa status.

### Where to get help

- **Anti-Slavery Australia**  
[antislavery.org.au/contact/](https://antislavery.org.au/contact/)
- **Fair Work Ombudsman**  
[fairwork.gov.au](https://fairwork.gov.au)
- **Working Women's Centre Australia**  
[wwc.org.au/help-and-contact](https://wwc.org.au/help-and-contact)
- **Australian Red Cross**  
[redcross.org.au/work-right-hub/directory/](https://redcross.org.au/work-right-hub/directory/)
- **Australian Federal Police**  
[afp.gov.au/crimes/human-trafficking-and-people-smuggling/human-trafficking-and-slavery](https://afp.gov.au/crimes/human-trafficking-and-people-smuggling/human-trafficking-and-slavery)

*To further enhance your knowledge and understanding about labour exploitation you can undertake this free e-module developed by the Australian Red Cross: [redcross.org.au/globalassets/html-sites/work-right-hub/labour-exploitation/story.html](https://redcross.org.au/globalassets/html-sites/work-right-hub/labour-exploitation/story.html)*

---