



# Forced Marriage Educational Resource for Schools and Services





Taldumande's Honour My Choice program is a leader in prevention and care of children and young people who are victims/survivors of forced marriage. Honour My Choice offers trauma-informed and culturally sensitive wrap-around case management support for children and young people affected by forced marriage, as well as educational resources for schools and front-line community workers who are in a position to identify the children and young people of concern.

***Honour My Choice provides in-depth education, resources and support to schools and services on the crime of forced marriage***

The Honour My Choice Educational Resource aims to:

- 1** Direct and assist professionals and school staff who may interact with children and young people currently involved in, or at risk of, forced marriage.
- 2** Build the capacity of professionals and school staff to better understand the complex nature of forced marriage in the Australian context.
- 3** Assist professionals and school staff to better understand and provide a safe, strategic response when supporting a child or young person.

*Disclaimer: Please note that the Honour My Choice Educational Resource, and all included content and documentation, convey basic information about forced marriage, aiming to provide education and awareness about forced marriage affecting children/young people in Australia. This information is not a substitute for professional legal advice and does not wholly cover all legal aspects of forced marriage but is intended as a first step in understanding forced marriage in an Australian context and its implications.*

# Honour My Choice can help children and young people to access:

## Confidential Guidance:

The first step is connecting the child/young person to your School Counsellor, Principal or Teacher or another trusted adult who can help them to contact an Honour My Choice staff member safely and securely to get more information, or to report their situation and get assistance.

## Case Management:

The Honour My Choice case manager will support children/young people with everything they need, so that they can make informed decisions about their own life. Our case managers are specialised in forced marriage and will provide confidential support services, assist them to finish their education or to get work, and to access legal guidance or mental health support.

# Case Management & Wrap Around Services



## Types of Taldumande youth accommodation:

Crisis  
Refuge

Semi  
Independent  
Accommodation

Independent  
Accommodation

Aftercare/  
Independence

### What is forced marriage?

**Forced marriage is a slavery-like practice, a form of gender-based violence, and a violation of human rights**

Under Commonwealth law a forced marriage is one where a person gets married without freely and fully consenting because they have been coerced, threatened or deceived, or because they are incapable of understanding the nature and effect of a marriage ceremony, for reasons including age or mental capacity. A person can be coerced through obvious means such as force, detention or duress, or through more subtle means like psychological oppression, an abuse of power or taking advantage of the person's vulnerability. A forced marriage includes a marriage where one or more persons is under 16 years of age.

In Australia, it is a criminal offence to force someone to get married without their full and free consent. It is illegal for any person under the age of 16 to marry. In some cases, a 16 or 17 year old person can get married, where there is consent (usually parental) and an Australian court order authorising the marriage.

Forced marriage is not limited to any particular cultural group, religion or ethnicity. Anyone, regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, religious or cultural background can be forced or coerced into marriage. While men and boys can be victims of forced marriage, most reported victims are young women and girls. The crime of forced marriage also applies to cultural, religious or legal marriages that occur in Australia, including where a person was brought to Australia to get married, as well as where a person is taken from Australia to get married overseas.

Some types of force or coercion are obvious and easy to identify, such as the use of physical or sexual violence, or forcefully detaining someone in a particular location until they accept the marriage. Other types of coercion or deception are less evident, as they involve emotional or psychological pressure or abuse of power. This can include making a person feel that they are bringing shame upon or being disloyal to their family, or that they are made to feel ashamed or responsible for the consequences of not marrying.

## The Australian Government's Response

Australia's response to forced marriage forms part of the Australian Government's strategy to combat serious forms of exploitation, including human trafficking, slavery, and other slavery-like practices such as servitude and forced labour.

The Commonwealth Criminal Code Act 1995 (the Criminal Code) contains offences regarding forced marriage. It is illegal to cause a person to enter a forced marriage, and to be a party to a forced marriage. Being a party to a forced marriage means agreeing to marry a person who you know or suspect is a victim of forced marriage, unless you are a victim of the forced marriage yourself.

### Forced Marriage Offences:

**The crime of forced marriage can apply to:**

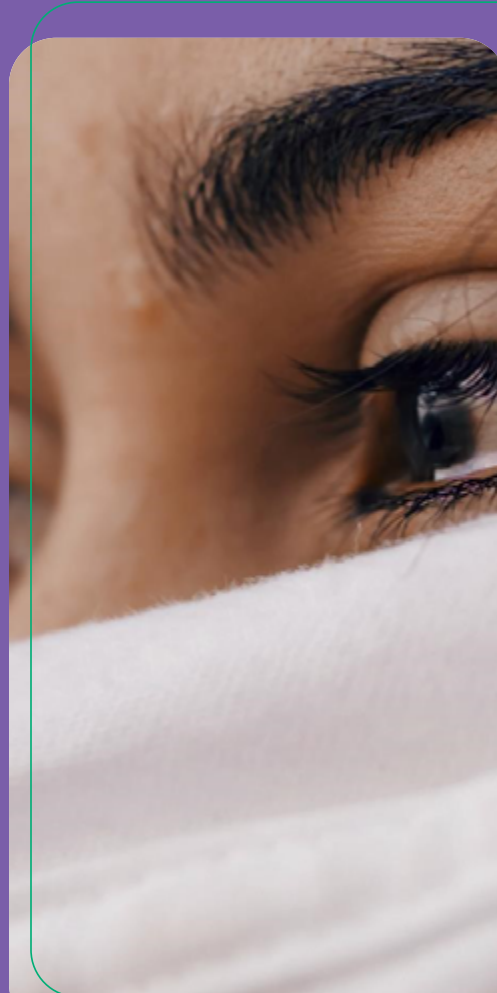
legally recognised marriages, as well as cultural or religious ceremonies and registered relationships

marriages that occur in Australia (including where a person was brought to Australia to get married), as well as where a person is taken overseas to get married

the conduct of any person involved in bringing about the forced marriage, including family members, friends, wedding planners and marriage celebrants

The offences apply regardless of the age, gender, or sexual orientation of the victim.

Australia's forced marriage offences carry a maximum penalty of seven years' imprisonment, or nine years' imprisonment for an aggravated offence. An offence may be aggravated in several circumstances, including where the victim is under the age of 18. If the victim is under the age of 18 and is taken overseas for the purpose of forced marriage, the maximum penalty increases to 25 years' imprisonment.



## What are the signs that a child/young person is in, or at risk of, a forced marriage?

If someone you know is in, or at risk of, a forced marriage, they may have difficulty telling you about their situation. Teachers, school staff, and other frontline workers in youth and social services may see a child or young person with one or more of the following which may indicate that a person is in a forced marriage, or at risk of being made to enter into a forced marriage:

- a sudden announcement that the child/young person is engaged
- the child/young person's older brothers or sisters stopped going to school or were married early
- the child/young person's family have a lot of control over their life or activities (e.g. the child/young person is never allowed to go out, or always has to have somebody else from the family with them)
- the child/young person's family is unusually restrictive in their use of technology, such as a mobile phone or laptop
- the child/young person displays signs of depression, self-harming, social isolation and substance abuse
- the child/young person seems scared or nervous about an upcoming family holiday overseas
- the child/young person has lengthy unexplained absences, or suddenly withdraws from, or has a drop in performance at school, university or work
- the child/young person doesn't have control over their income
- the child/young person is unable to make significant decisions about their future, including vocational planning, without consultation or agreement from their parents/family members
- there is evidence of family disputes or conflict, domestic violence or abuse
- the child/young person is experiencing housing issues, is seeking emergency shelter or running away from home
- the child/young person seeking (urgent) pre-travel vaccinations and health checks

While these indicators could be contributing factors to a number of issues, if a child or young person is displaying or experiencing any of the above, they may be at risk of forced marriage, or experiencing the repercussions of refusing a marriage.

***Your first conversations with a child/young person about forced marriage should be confidential, culturally sensitive and trauma-informed***

## How can you support a child/young person in, or at risk of, a forced marriage?

If you suspect a child or young person in your organisation is in, or at risk of, a forced marriage, help is available.

Seek specialised support as early as possible

Seek the child/young person's consent (wherever possible) before notifying specialist services. You can, however, make anonymous an anonymous report to the relevant agencies and authorities

Depending on the age of the child/young person, you may also need to notify child protection services, or undertake mandatory reporting as per the legislation and requirements in your jurisdiction

**Specialised guidance and support is available**



# Support Agencies:

## **TALDUMANDE YOUTH SERVICES (TYS):**

Supports vulnerable and homeless children and young people aged 12-24 years, and their families, across Sydney. The TYS Honour My Choice program provides safe accommodation and specialised case management for children/young people at risk of or experiencing forced marriage, as well as educational resources and workshops for schools and service providers.

📞 (02) 9460 3777 ✉ [administration@taldumande.org.au](mailto:administration@taldumande.org.au) 🌐 [www.taldumande.org.au](http://www.taldumande.org.au)

## **EMERGENCY SERVICES:**

In an emergency, call Triple Zero (000) immediately.

📞 1800 333 000 🌐 [www.crimestoppers.com.au](http://www.crimestoppers.com.au)

## **AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE:**

To report an incident of forced marriage, you can do so by calling the AFP or completing an online reporting form on their website.

📞 131 AFP (131 237) 🌐 [www.afp.gov.au](http://www.afp.gov.au)

## **TRANSLATING AND INTERPRETING SERVICE:**

If you require an interpreter, you can contact the government's translating and interpreting service.

📞 131 450 🌐 [www.tisnational.gov.au](http://www.tisnational.gov.au)

## **FORCED MARRIAGE COMMUNITY PACK:**

The Australian Government, in partnership with the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery's Communication and Awareness Working Group, has developed a Forced Marriage Community Pack.

The pack provides information and resources on forced marriage and is available to download:



# A New Pathway Program

Since 2015, Taldumande Youth Services has offered safe and secure accommodation tailored for girls and young women aged 16-21 who are escaping forced marriage. Specialist case management and accommodation is also provided to young male victims of forced marriage either through one of our other Taldumande properties or in collaboration with external accommodation services.

Our houses are spacious and furnished, with individual bedrooms. Our friendly Honour My Choice case managers will be there to help young people get settled and will provide intensive support every step of the way. A New Pathway program offers daily support, so young people can set personal goals, and work on their living skills until they feel ready to transition to more independent accommodation.

When young people are ready to move to more independent accommodation, we can assist them to transition to other Taldumande properties or we can connect them to a variety of suitable accommodation services in the community.

 (02) 9460 3777 Monday - Friday 9am - 5pm

 [administration@taldumande.org.au](mailto:administration@taldumande.org.au)

 [www.taldumande.org.au](http://www.taldumande.org.au)

**If you think someone is in, or at immediate risk of a forced marriage,  
call the Australian Federal Police on 131 AFP (131 237).**

**In an emergency, dial Triple Zero (000).**

**This modern slavery grant project received grant funding  
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