



Tackling Modern Slavery



Why do we need this?

Despite warnings from leading human rights and faith-based organisations, the Morrison Government is failing to address modern slavery in Australia and in global supply chains. The Modern Slavery Act (2018) doesn't go far enough – there are no penalties for non-compliance and many Australian businesses are simply treating it as a box-ticking exercise.

A recent report by the International Justice Mission [found](#) that over 90 per cent of Australian businesses have identified potential slavery risks in their supply chains. But nearly 85 per cent of 404 company statements submitted under Australia's Modern Slavery Act failed to show any response to actual or alleged slavery in operations or supply chains. Almost three quarters of company statements either did not satisfy or only just met basic reporting obligations.

Analysis by the Human Rights Law Centre of 102 Australian companies has [found](#) that 77 per cent of companies had failed to comply with the basic reporting requirements mandated by the legislation; 52 per cent had failed to identify obvious modern slavery risks in their operations or supply chains; and just 27 per cent of companies appeared to be taking some form of effective action to address modern slavery risks.

Research by Walk Free on the Australian garment industry's compliance with the Modern Slavery Act [found](#) that only 31 per cent of the Australian statements produced by the garment industry meet requirements for approval and mandatory criteria.

The Morrison Government is ignoring the problem, rather than working with industry, unions, and community responders to find solutions and stop modern slavery. It has failed to listen to calls from Labor, church groups and human rights NGOs to strengthen the Modern Slavery Act, leaving Australia far behind many of our like-minded partners in addressing forced labour and modern slavery.

This is a global problem – in 2017, an estimated 40.3 million people around the world were living in conditions of modern slavery. 24.9 million of these people were in forced labour situations. And nearly two thirds of the people living in conditions of modern slavery are in our region (the Asia Pacific).

No matter the country of origin, we must pursue an effective, comprehensive, country-agnostic approach to address these global problems – both at home and abroad.

The Detail

Labor will appoint an independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner and establish an office within the Attorney-General's Department to coordinate work across government and with industry to eliminate modern slavery in Australia and global supply chains. The Commissioner will monitor the effectiveness of all Federal and State institutions to tackle modern slavery. It will work with the Australian Border Force, the Australian Sanctions office and AUSTRAC, and with international partners to increase outreach and information-sharing.

The Commissioner will publish an annual list of countries, regions, industries, and products with a high risk of modern slavery, including forced labour. Companies importing from these places would be required to prove goods are not made with forced labour.

We will consult with stakeholders including business and advocacy groups in amending the Modern Slavery Act 2018 to introduce penalties for non-compliance and require mandatory reporting on exposure to specified issues of pressing concern (including Uyghur forced labour).

We will boost resources for the Ambassador to Counter Modern Slavery, People Smuggling and Human Trafficking in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, to work with partners in our region to build awareness and help countries strengthen their responses to modern slavery – including forced labour and forced marriage. And we will consider targeted sanctions on foreign companies, officials and other entities known to be directly profiting from forced labour and other human rights abuses.

And we will undertake an audit of the federal government's procurement procedures and supply chains and disclose this publicly, as part of the existing Modern Slavery Register to ensure the government is leading by example. This should act as a blueprint for state and territory governments to also review their supply chains and ensure that they are not importing goods made from forced labour.

Labor has already announced reforms to the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme to [improve working conditions for Pacific workers](#).

Labor will tackle modern slavery at home and abroad by strengthening the Modern Slavery Act and appointing an Anti-Slavery Commissioner to work with business, civil society, NGOs and State and Territory government to ensure compliance and improve transparency of supply chains.

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