



Follow-Up information from Ethical Clothing Australia (ECA), to the inquiry into the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for Australia's foreign affairs, defence and trade, being held by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade.

Dated: August 19, 2020

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Quality Concerns

1. As noted at the Committee hearing on July 9, 2020 part of ECA's evidence was that fraudulent PPE products and products that were not fit for purpose were being sold globally during COVID-19, and there was at least one instance of these products being imported into Australia.
2. ECA gave a commitment to send in evidence attesting these issues, and the various news articles below are provided to the Committee for that purpose.
3. [Media Article 1](#) "Australia seizes faulty coronavirus protective equipment imported from China". Written by Andrew Greene. Published on ABC online 01/04/2020. The article states that authorities have begun seizing Chinese-made faulty face masks and other protective clothing that was being exported to Australia . The articles says that Australian Border Force (ABF) officers have intercepted several deliveries of personal protective equipment (PPE) that have been found to be counterfeit or otherwise faulty.
4. [Media Article 2](#) "Netherlands recalls hundreds of thousands of defective Chinese face masks". Written by Euronews and published 29/03/2020. This article states that the Netherlands has recalled hundreds of thousands of face masks imported from China after they were found to be defective. It says that Dutch authorities received 1.3 million face masks from China on March 21 and distributed some of them to health care providers battling against the spread of COVID-19, but the health ministry "received a signal that, upon inspection, the quality of this shipment did not meet the required standards," it said in a statement sent to Euronews. A second test also proved that the face masks did not meet the required quality standards.
5. [Media Article 3](#) "Coronavirus: Safety concerns halt use of 50 million NHS masks". Written by Phil Kemp. Published on BBC News, 06/08/2020. The article notes that fifty million face masks bought by the UK government in April this year will not be used by the UK's NHS because of safety concerns. The article says that the masks were bought for NHS England healthcare workers from supplier Ayanda Capital as part of a £252m contract.





Modern Slavery Act

6. ECA was asked a number of questions in relation to the Modern Slavery Act which is largely focussed on the supply chains of businesses offshore while ECA's remit is restricted to working with manufacturers that are making products in Australia, and the rights of local garment workers.
7. In line with the evidence at the hearing, ECA supported the introduction of the Modern Slavery Act; we welcomed the introduction because it could help improve the standard of businesses operating overseas and it would increase transparency. This was outlined in a submission into the government's inquiry and a media statement at the time - read [here](#).
8. In line with a question from Senator Fierravanti-Wells during the hearing, ECA would implore the government to consider the risks of modern slavery and exploitation associated with imports and to consider how it can engage more with local and ethical suppliers, thereby not only securing the local supply of PPE goods, but also ensuring the ethical supply of these goods. The government could introduce a policy or weighting system to recognise the risks associated with imports.

Support to ensure a more competitive local industry

9. Lastly, ECA would like to take this opportunity to call for investment in the local industry to help build a more competitive, TCF manufacturing sector. The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in countries are looking to re-invest in their local manufacturing capabilities. Securing the local supply of TCF products and investing in innovation and technology in this sector will ensure that it is a competitive and sustainable industry into the future.

ENDS

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