



PARLIAMENT of AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND AID SUB-COMMITTEE

JOINT STANDING COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DEFENCE AND TRADE

Inquiry into modern slavery

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COMBATTING MODERN SLAVERY

The Foreign Affairs and Aid Sub-Committee of the Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade has commenced an inquiry into whether Australia should adopt national legislation to combat modern slavery, comparable to the United Kingdom's *Modern Slavery Act 2015*.

'The appalling practice of modern slavery is a scourge that regrettably continues to affect millions of people around the world, including in Australia,' Foreign Affairs and Aid Sub-Committee Chair, Mr Chris Crewther MP, said.

According to the 2016 Global Slavery Index, an estimated 45.8 million people around the world are in some form of modern slavery, which describes a range of exploitative practices including human trafficking, forced labour, wage exploitation, forced marriage and debt bondage.

'The Attorney-General's action in approving this important topic initiated by the Sub-Committee provides the opportunity to explore whether Australia's laws could be improved to prevent modern slavery both in Australia and in supply chains of businesses and organisations that operate in Australia and overseas.'

The Australian Government has already taken a number of significant steps to address modern slavery, including the implementation of the *National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery 2015-2019*, establishment of the Supply Chains Working Group and changes to the Criminal Code to strengthen penalties for offenders.

The Committee has previously looked at the impacts of modern slavery in its 2013 report, *Trading Lives: Modern Day Human Trafficking*. Since that report was released, governments around the world have introduced legislative changes to combat modern slavery, most notably the United Kingdom's *Modern Slavery Act 2015* which strengthens anti-slavery laws and introduces new measures to improve transparency in global supply chains.

Mr Crewther said the inquiry 'seeks to build on this work to explore what further changes could be made to strengthen Australia's efforts to combat modern slavery. This is particularly timely in light of the UK's recent introduction of the *Modern Slavery Act 2015* and allows the opportunity for the Committee to assess whether similar changes could be applied here in Australia.'

The **terms of reference** for the Committee's inquiry are:

With reference to the United Kingdom's Modern Slavery Act 2015 and to relevant findings from the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade's report, Trading Lives: Modern Day Human Trafficking, the Committee shall examine whether Australia should adopt a comparable Modern Slavery Act.

The Committee shall have particular regard to:

- 1. The nature and extent of modern slavery (including slavery, forced labour and wage exploitation, involuntary servitude, debt bondage, human trafficking, forced marriage and other slavery-like exploitation) both in Australia and globally;*
- 2. The prevalence of modern slavery in the domestic and global supply chains of companies, businesses and organisations operating in Australia;*
- 3. Identifying international best practice employed by governments, companies, businesses and organisations to prevent modern slavery in domestic and global supply chains, with a view to strengthening Australian legislation;*
- 4. The implications for Australia's visa regime, and conformity with the Palermo Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children regarding federal compensation for victims of modern slavery;*
- 5. Provisions in the United Kingdom's legislation which have proven effective in addressing modern slavery, and whether similar or improved measures should be introduced in Australia;*
- 6. Whether a Modern Slavery Act should be introduced in Australia; and*
- 7. Any other related matters.*

The Foreign Affairs and Aid Sub-Committee invites submissions from anyone with an interest in the issues raised by these terms of reference. Submissions addressing the terms of reference should be lodged by **28 April 2017**. Further details about the inquiry, including how to contribute, can be obtained from the Committee's web site, www.aph.gov.au/jfadt, or by contacting the Committee Secretariat.

[Track this inquiry](#)

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For background:

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