



January 2024

**Modern Slavery Amendment (Australian
Anti-Slavery Commissioner) Bill 2023
[Provisions]**

**International Centre for Missing and
Exploited Children (ICMEC) Australia**



ICMEC Australia is pleased to make this submission in support of the proposed establishment of an Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner through the upcoming Amendment to the *Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth)*. As a not-for-profit organisation operating across various sectors, ICMEC Australia's primary focus is on promoting a whole-of-ecosystem approach to protecting children, ensuring that every child can grow up free from abuse and exploitation.

Child sexual exploitation intersects with modern slavery in many ways - including, but not limited to, the alarming rise in financial sextortion cases with children becoming victims of money muling schemes through organised crime syndicates, and the livestreaming of children's abuse for illicit financial gain. The complexity and prevalence of these crimes has significantly increased with the advent of the internet, providing offenders with new opportunities to manipulate and exploit children in a borderless environment.

ICMEC Australia recognises the urgent need for a comprehensive response to combat the crime of modern slavery - with specific focus on the sexual exploitation of children. We firmly believe that a cross-industry, collaborative approach is essential to effective mitigation and prevention. As such, the establishment of an Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner is a crucial step towards addressing the multifaceted nature of these crimes. The Australian Childhood Foundation recently found that 76% of leaders in banking and finance believe there is no potential for child exploitation to occur within their business or industry (2023). Sadly, the sexual exploitation of children permeates all aspects of our society, business, and ultimately our entire nation. As a consequence, we need a dedicated and empowered authority to lead efforts in prevention, intervention, and prosecution.

The sexual exploitation of children is an abhorrent crime that impacts the lives of far too many innocent children across the globe. In the 2022-23 financial year, the Australian Centre to Counter Child Exploitation (ACCCE) Child Protection Triage Unit received 40,232 reports of child sexual exploitation.

ICMEC Australia commends the inclusion of children's rights, as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in the proposed Amendment. We particularly emphasise the "*Right to protection from exploitation, violence, and abuse*" that is referenced in the Bill. The establishment of an Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner aligns with our commitment to upholding these rights as a nation, and overall strengthens Australia's dedication to combating all forms of modern slavery.

We appreciate the frequent reference to the victim-survivor voice within this amendment, acknowledging that these horrendous crimes have an indelible impact on the lives of real children - and their voices must be central as we navigate fighting this crime.

ICMEC Australia fully supports the broad scope of the Commissioner's mandate, allowing the office to work comprehensively to prevent and combat modern slavery. The powers vested in the Commissioner, as outlined in the Amendment, reflect the gravity of this crime



and the necessity for a robust response - particularly in bringing this issue to the forefront of public attention through targeted advocacy efforts. We appreciate the emphasis on collaboration and partnership, and express our eagerness to work alongside the appointed Commissioner.

We acknowledge the existing positive impact of the NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner and believe that a Commissioner at the national level will significantly enhance Australia's response to modern slavery, and build on the current work of the NSW Commissioner. The inclusion of the rights of children throughout the Bill is vital, given their disproportionate vulnerability to these crimes. Shockingly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime's 2022 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons found that *"Girls and women are three times more likely to suffer explicit or extreme violence during trafficking compared to boys and men, and children overall are two times more likely to be subjected to violence than adults."* It's clear we must do more as a global community to protect our children.

Our organisation supports the establishment of the Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner and urges thorough consideration and prompt action on this matter. The safety of our children - our most vulnerable people - should necessitate nothing less than the strongest response. We are committed to contributing our expertise and resources to collaborate with the Commissioner, ensuring a collective effort to combat modern slavery and protect the rights of children.

Thank you for considering our submission. ICMEC Australia welcomes further discussions and consultation in this space.

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