

Thursday, 29 November 2018

Modern Slavery Act a reality after years of advocacy

The Law Council has today applauded the historic passing of Australia's first federal Modern Slavery Act, an initiative long sought after by the peak legal body.

Under the new laws, entities with an annual consolidated revenue of more than \$100 million will be required to report on slavery risks in their supply chains.

Law Council of Australia President, Morry Bailes, congratulated the Australian Government, and Parliament, for making a Modern Slavery Act a reality.

"The Law Council has long advocated for a Modern Slavery Act, because we believe it is necessary if Australia is to play its part in eliminating slavery and slavery-like conditions," Mr Bailes said.

"Too often we are tempted to think of slavery as a relic of the past. But the truth is there are millions of people today held in slavery, and that includes in Australia.

"Introducing accountability into the supply chains of large organisations will go a significant way toward mitigating the scourge of modern slavery."

Mr Bailes said that it looks forward to working with Government, and Parliament, to improve the regime into the future.

"One way it can be improved is with the addition of an Anti-Slavery Commissioner," Mr Bailes said.

"The Law Council has long advocated for the creation of an Anti-Slavery Commissioner role. We believe such a Commissioner would act as a useful point of contact for all matters relevant to modern slavery in Australia.

"A Commissioner could also provide community outreach and education to stakeholders involved in Australia's response to modern slavery, including law enforcement, civil society and the private sector," Mr Bailes said.

Mr Bailes also said he hopes that a penalty regime eventually forms part of the Act.

"The most effective way to ensure company comply would be to include substantial penalties for non-compliance," Mr Bailes said.

"However, we do note the amendments for annual reporting and a three-year review of the Act and look forward to engaging with Parliament to further improve this historic legislation."

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