

Friday, 20 January 2017

## Law Council backs amendments to help bring slavery out of the shadows

Amendments aimed at strengthening the nation's criminal justice legislative response to human trafficking, slavery, and slavery-like offences are strongly supported by the Australian legal profession.

In a [submission](#) to the Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee's [Inquiry](#) into the Crimes Legislation Amendment (International Crime Cooperation and Other Measures) Bill 2016, the Law Council of Australia has endorsed important changes including those that would allow for:

- The protection of a child complainant who is not a witness in a proceeding, including in serious sexual exploitation, human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices such as forced marriage proceedings.
- Appropriate protections and supports to be in place to ensure vulnerable witnesses are in a position to present their testimony to the court whereby the risk of intimidation, trauma, fear and/or undue public embarrassment are minimised.

Law Council of Australia President, Fiona McLeod SC, said amending the laws was an essential step towards bringing slavery and human trafficking out of the shadows.

"Slavery is very much a reality in modern Australia and across the globe," Ms McLeod said.

"But to most Australians slavery and human trafficking are invisible.

"Amending Australian laws so that extra protections and supports are afforded to those who need it the most — the vulnerable and the abused, especially children — is a very important step.

"We commend the Federal Government's intent in this crucial area. We know there are people right now in Australia being exploited and controlled through intimidation. We need to do everything we can to encourage potential witnesses and protect those who do come forward," Ms McLeod said.

In the same submission, the Law Council raised concerns that coercive processes were still available to compel information in cases which carry the death penalty. The Law Council recommends prompt implementation of recommendations made by the last year's joint parliamentary report: [A world without the death penalty](#).

Late last year, the Law Council and Anti-Slavery Australia, at University of Technology Sydney, released a report outlining the case for a national compensation scheme for survivors of human trafficking, slavery, and slavery-like practices. The Law Council continues to call for the establishment of such a scheme. The report can be accessed [here](#).

---

**Patrick Pantano: Public Affairs**

P 02 6246 3715

E [Patrick.Pantano@lawcouncil.asn.au](mailto:Patrick.Pantano@lawcouncil.asn.au)

---

**Anil Lambert: Media**

P 0416 426 722

E [anil@hortonadvisory.com.au](mailto:anil@hortonadvisory.com.au)