

Thursday, 17 August 2017

Law Council welcomes Parliamentary Committee's recommendation for a Modern Slavery Act

The Law Council of Australia has strongly welcomed recommendations included in an interim report of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, which has called for the development of a Modern Slavery Act.

The Committee has recommended that a Modern Slavery Act should include the creation of an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

Law Council of Australia President, Fiona McLeod SC, who has long played a prominent role in advocating for a more robust Australian approach to anti-slavery, welcomed the Committee's core recommendations.

"Today's [report](#) is a vital step on the path to an Australian Modern Slavery Act," Ms McLeod said.

"Slavery is not just a scourge of the past. It is a crushing present reality for thousands living in Australia, and millions across the globe.

"Nations like Australia have a responsibility to take a robust approach to fighting slavery and casting a light on this dark and terrible corner of our economy and society.

"The Law Council has called on Australia to follow the UK's lead and introduce an Anti-Slavery Commissioner as soon as possible to independently oversee our national response. It is satisfying to see that the Committee shares our view and we look forward to working with the Federal Government to help make this a reality."

Ms McLeod also noted that the Committee had given its in-principle support to introduce penalties to companies that do not report in compliance with the Modern Slavery Act reporting requirements.

Yesterday, the Federal Government [announced](#) it would be moving to introduce a legal requirement for large Australian companies to report on measures they are taking to combat slavery. However, it stopped short of specifying a penalty regime.

"The Law Council believes that for a reporting regime to be effective there must be robust penalties for non-compliance to ensure rigour and accountability," Ms McLeod said.

"We are pleased the Committee shares this view and we strongly urge the Government to consider developing defined penalties along with its new reporting legislation."

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