

Media Release August 2017

AFN Welcomes Modern Slavery Act Announcement

The Chair of the Australian Freedom Network (AFN) Salvation Army Commissioner James Condon has welcomed the Federal Government's announcement of an Act of Parliament to eradicate modern slavery both here and overseas.

"Today's announcement by the Minister for Justice the Hon. Michael Keenan MP is a significant breakthrough. A new Act of Parliament will require companies to monitor and take action to address slavery in their supply chains.

"Thousands of people in Australia and millions across our region are in situations of modern slavery right now. They are victims of forced labour, debt bondage, human trafficking and more. We are all morally obliged to take whatever steps we can to ensure that the way we do business isn't making someone else's life a misery."

Today's announcement from the Government follows Federal Opposition Leader Bill Shorten's announcement in June in support of legislation to require companies to ensure their products are not the result of slavery and to check on practices in their entire supply chains. Commissioner Condon said "I congratulate both major parties for demonstrating strong bipartisan support to eradicate modern slavery."

The Business Council of Australia also said: "We welcome moves towards a Modern Slavery Act. Increased transparency will help customers, investors and business partners more easily distinguish whether companies are acting morally and working to maintain clean supply chains."

The announcements by business, Government and the Opposition demonstrate the consensus around whether a Modern Slavery Act similar to one in operation in the UK in 2015, could also be effective in Australia.

"The faith leaders in the Australian Freedom Network believe our country needs a Modern Slavery Act, which is why we wrote to Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull last December to call for one," said Commissioner Condon.

"We are very grateful that the Government has listened and advanced this proposal.

"Today I restate our faith leaders' request that the Australian Government adopt world's best practise legislation to ensure the supply chains of Australian businesses are transparent and free of exploitation or slavery-like practices.

"Australians simply must be assured that the goods they consume and the services they use are not produced on the back of slave labour," said James Condon.

Available for comment:

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Background:

AFN Modern Slavery Act submission:

http://afn.org.au/subscribe/sites/afn.org.au/files/Inquiries-MSA-AFN_Submission-20170426.pdf

AFN leaders appear at a hearing before the Modern Slavery Act Inquiry 23 June transcript:

http://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/ModernSlavery/Public_Hearings and photos <https://www.flickr.com/photos/144418511@N04/albums/72157685165413540>

AFN hosts UK Anti Slavery Commissioner at NSW Parliament:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/144418511@N04/albums/72157685071907203>

