

Australian Faith Leaders Statement on UN International Day for the Abolition of Slavery

December 2nd 2016

The International Day for the Abolition of Slavery recognises the continuing plight of over 45 million people who still live under the conditions of modern slavery. Modern Slavery involves the ancient forms of slavery itself, human trafficking, forced labour, debt bondage, organ trafficking, forced or servile marriage, and the sale of and exploitation of girls, boys, women and men.

Australia's faith leaders joined together on this day in 2015 to commit to work together and lead our communities in eradicating slavery from our planet.

Today we renew our commitment.

Only through the leadership of Government, business, civil society and faiths can we overcome the terrible abuse of the human rights of so many of our fellow human beings.

Today we come together to call on the Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull and his Government to enact an Australian Modern Slavery Act that reflects world's best practise in the fight to end this evil.

Much has been achieved in Australia to combat human trafficking and slavery both here and abroad and our political leaders are to be commended for their action. But more must be done if we are to succeed in putting an end to slavery in all its forms.

While the reported incidence of these abuses in Australia are relatively small in number they still occur and must be tackled head on with all our energies.

By legislating for an Australian Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner we can ensure protection of the rights of those in Australia that might otherwise be exploited.

Australia must adopt world's best practise legislation that ensures supply chains of Australian businesses are transparent and free of unethical exploitation or slavery like practices. Australians must be assured that the goods they consume and the services they use are not produced on the back of slave labour.

Australia through our international engagement and our Foreign Aid budget does tremendous work in helping tackle modern Slavery practices in the countries in our region.

Australia should build on that record and join countries like the United Kingdom and the USA in showing leadership to the world by ensuring we have strong modern comprehensive legislation.

