

Public Affairs Commission,
Anglican Church of Australia,
c/o Suite 4, Level 5,
189 Kent Street,
Sydney NSW 2000
13 July 2018

Committee Secretary,
Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee,
PO Box 6100,
Parliament House,
Canberra ACT 2600

Modern Slavery Bill 2018

I am writing on behalf of the Public Affairs Commission (PAC) of the Anglican Church of Australia. The Primate of the Anglican Church has forwarded your request for submissions to the PAC. The PAC is a commission set up by the Standing Committee of the Anglican Church of Australia and draws its members from around Australia.

The Anglican Church of Australia has expressed concern about human trafficking and slavery which are clearly an abuse of the dignity and need to care for all people made in the image of God. At its meeting in 2017, the General Synod passed the following resolution:

GS42/17 Australian Freedom Network

That this General Synod –

1. Notes the establishment of the Australian Freedom Network (AFN) signed by the Primate on our behalf;
2. Commends those involved in the establishment of the Global Freedom Network of which the AFN is part;
3. Acknowledges the continuing reality of human trafficking and slavery, and laments the damage that this does to all involved as a distortion of what it means to be created in God's image;
4. Commits to personal and organisational behaviour that utilises tools such as the "Ethical Fashion Guide" and information regarding corporate supply chains to inform decisions surrounding consumption so that ethical choices can be made; and
5. Requests that the General Synod network, Anglican Schools Australia, consider how it may collaborate with the AFN to explore how Anglican Schools in Australia may be supported as they educate students to be ethical leaders in the Australian community.

The PAC supports a strong Modern Slavery Act which is essential to protect the rights of vulnerable workers around the world and in Australia. Businesses which source their goods unfairly as a result of modern slavery need to be held accountable to protect workers in their

supply chain and Australia needs to use its buying power to ensure proper conditions for such workers.

We support the requirement for the major companies and Commonwealth to provide Modern Slavery statements and for the opportunity for others to provide voluntary statements and for these to appear on a public central register. The mandatory criteria for such statements to ensure some level of particularity in the reporting is important. It is good that these statements have to be approved by the governing body level of the reporting entity. We also welcome the announcement that Australia will take such matters into account in procurement policies.

However, the opportunity should not be missed to strengthen the legal requirements. We urge that:

1. Penalties need to be imposed for non-compliance in reporting or misleading reporting. Such penalties could be financial but could involve other methods of enforcement, such as companies in breach being debarred from participating in government procurement or tenders. There could be publication of lists of non-complying companies or government authorities.
2. There should be a provision that the reports provided should not be misleading or deceptive and thus enable consumer protection authorities or Australian consumers to take action under consumer legislation for misleading and deceptive conduct if applicable.
3. An Anti-Slavery Commissioner should be appointed to oversee and ensure compliance with the legislation and implement policies. Such a person needs to be independent of government and have the role of advocacy
4. The \$100 million dollar revenue threshold for reporting is far too high. The revenue threshold should be reduced, preferably to \$25 million in accord with the definition of a large corporation, in order to broaden the number of companies covered by the requirements of the legislation.
5. It is important that subsidiaries of Australian companies operating overseas should be covered by the reporting requirement of the Australian companies.
6. There be provisions requiring protections and support for victims of slavery. This could be include a compensation scheme for such victims.
7. The importation of any goods which sourced from modern slavery should be prohibited.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Carolyn Tan,
Chairperson of the Public Affairs Commission.