

Friday, 24 November 2017

## Intention to ratify ILO Forced Labour Protocol crucial step in combatting slavery

The Law Council of Australia has applauded the Australian Government's confirmation that it intends to ratify the [ILO Forced Labour Protocol](#) as a vital development in combating forced labour, trafficking, and slavery-like practices.

The Protocol establishes obligations to prevent forced labour and, importantly, to provide victims with access to remedy. The Protocol reaffirms the importance of prosecuting the perpetrators of forced labour and ending their impunity. It adds new elements to the Forced Labour Convention which Australia ratified in 1932, aimed at tackling the complexities of modern slavery and addressing the root causes of forced labour.

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, noted the significance of the confirmation.

"The Australian Government's move to ratify the ILO Forced Labour Protocol is a crucial step and, on behalf of the Australian legal sector, I congratulate the government for taking it," Ms McLeod said.

"Tens of millions of people worldwide face slavery like conditions and many thousands in Australia.

"The social, economic, and moral impact of those numbers is staggering, and it is predominantly the world's most vulnerable people, including women and children, being exploited.

"Australia's wealth, privilege, and strong rule of law makes it a country well-placed to play a leading role in dealing with this global scourge.

"The Forced Labour Protocol also requires the Australian Government to support due diligence by both the public and private sectors on supply chains."

Ms McLeod noted the announcement could be added to a number of other significant shifts in 2017, including steps toward the establishment of a Modern Slavery Act, and the Australian Government's announcement of a Modern Slavery in Supply Chains Reporting Requirement.

Ms McLeod this year chaired the Labour Exploitation Working Group of the National Roundtable on Trafficking, Slavery and Slavery-like Practices. She also participated in the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group on Implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

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**Patrick Pantano: Public Affairs**  
P 02 6246 3715 (includes mobile)  
E Patrick.Pantano@lawcouncil.asn.au

**Sonia Byrnes: Communications**  
P 0437 078 850  
E Sonia.Byrnes@lawcouncil.asn.au