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## Requiring business to report on anti-slavery efforts a historic step in addressing modern scourge

Plans for a new legal requirement for large Australian companies to report on measures they are taking to combat slavery is a momentous step along the path to an appropriately comprehensive anti-slavery regime, according to the Law Council of Australia.

The Federal Government has announced that it proposes to introduce legislation that will make it a requirement for large businesses to report annually on their actions to address modern slavery.

Law Council of Australia President, Fiona McLeod SC, who has played a prominent role in advocating for a more robust Australian approach to anti-slavery over the course of her career, today strongly welcomed the Government's action.

"Unfortunately, exploitation is alive and well in modern Australia," Ms McLeod said.

"In recent years alone we have seen shocking domestic examples of human trafficking, sex slavery, forced labour, deceptive recruiting for labour services, forced marriage, and debt bondage. And we know what comes to light is only a very tiny sample of what lurks in the shadows.

"Requiring large businesses to scrutinise their supply chains and report on measures they are taking to combat exploitation is a very important mechanism to shine a light on modern slavery."

In reviewing the [consultation paper](#) on the proposed model for a Modern Slavery in Supply Chains Reporting Requirement, Ms McLeod said that the Law Council believes the reporting threshold should be somewhat less than \$100 million.

"The consultation paper outlines a potential reporting threshold of \$100 million, which we believe should be reduced," Ms McLeod said.

"This threshold only captures some 2000 companies and a lower threshold would do more to address the problem. The UK's anti-slavery legislation model, for example, captures all businesses with revenue the equivalent of \$A60 million and over.

"There should also be robust penalties for non-compliance to ensure rigour and accountability."

Ms McLeod also said it was important to expedite moves toward introducing an Anti-Slavery Commissioner and National Compensation Scheme for victims of slavery.

"Australia should follow the UK's lead and introduce an Anti-Slavery Commissioner as soon as possible to independently oversee our national response," Ms McLeod said.

"And a National Compensation Scheme is necessary not only to provide justice, but to ensure that victims are incentivised to come forward and tell their stories."

Last year, the Law Council of Australia, in conjunction with Anti-Slavery Australia [released a landmark report](#) outlining the importance of a National Compensation Scheme.

Ms McLeod said she looked forward to engaging closely with Government throughout the consultation process following today's landmark announcement.

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