

Tuesday, 18 July 2017

Recommendations for a National Compensation Scheme for victims of slavery should be swiftly accepted

The Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement's recommendation for a National Compensation Scheme for victims of trafficking and slavery has been enthusiastically backed by the Australian legal profession, which has been advocating for such a scheme for some time.

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.

The Law Council has today also thrown its support behind the Committee's call for the creation of a national Anti-Slavery and Trafficking Commissioner role.

Law Council of Australia President, Fiona McLeod SC, said the changes were necessary to combat a huge and growing problem.

"Too often we think of slavery as a horror of the past, when it is actually very much alive in modern Australia," Ms McLeod said.

"We have seen recent examples of human trafficking, slavery, forced labour, deceptive recruiting for labour services, forced marriage, and debt bondage. And we know what comes to light is only the tip of the iceberg.

"While our legal framework is robust, our enforcement mechanisms are not working effectively. We need better structures to support victims of these horrendous crimes.

"Existing state and territory schemes are not designed to accommodate victims of federal offences against the person. They are technically complicated and vary considerably in their application.

"Australia has rightly recognised the need that victims of overseas terrorism have for a national compensation framework, yet there is no such harmonised program for human trafficking.

"A harmonised national scheme would send the clear message about Australia's human rights priorities.

"We thank the Committee for their hard work in producing this groundbreaking report and call on the Government to move swiftly to implement its recommendations," Ms McLeod said.

The recommendations were made in the [Inquiry into human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices](#) report released today.

Patrick Pantano: Public Affairs
P 02 6246 3715
E Patrick.Pantano@lawcouncil.asn.au

Anil Lambert, Media
P 0416 426 722
E anil@hortonadvisory.com.au