

Thursday 29 November, 2018

Bill too weak to eradicate modern slavery

The peak body for working people says the Modern Slavery Bill that passed in the Senate last night is too weak to properly fight to eradicate modern slavery and see it as a missed opportunity to introduce strong measures that would hold companies accountable.

The Bill fails to introduce penalties for companies that refuse to take part in a reporting and compliance regime, and appointing an independent anti-slavery commissioner.

Penalties are needed now, not in three years, if we want to properly eradicate slavery – forced labour, child labour, and debt bondage – in the supply chains of companies doing business in Australia and overseas.

As it stands, without fines, there will be no incentive for companies to report what they have done to deal with slavery in their supply chains.

The ACTU also calls on a decision not to appoint an independent anti-slavery commissioner to be revised. [The experience in the United Kingdom](#) shows us that without fines there is no incentive for companies to report.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O’Neil

“It’s disgusting that slavery exists widely in the supply chains of Australian companies doing business here and abroad and unfortunately this bill has missed an opportunity to really eradicate slavery by making sure companies are fully held accountable.

“The ACTU calls for civil penalties and the appointment of an independent anti-slavery commissioner as essentials in holding companies accountable for the presence of slavery in their supply chains.

“As it stands this bill doesn’t send a strong enough message to companies – we need fines in order to really be able to say they cannot get away with tolerating the presence of slavery as ‘business as usual’.

“Waiting for three years for a decision on whether to introduce fines to companies that refuse to take part in a reporting and compliance regime is a weak measure, it won’t be effectively in eradicating slavery.”

ENDS

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