

Monday 11 December, 2017

Report calls for Modern Slavery Act, as Turnbull backs away

The ACTU welcomes a report demanding a Modern Slavery Act for Australia, but is concerned that the Turnbull government is already signalling its intention to sidestep any attempt to confront this global issue.

The report produced by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence has made a number of recommendations which would start to restrict modern slavery practices in Australia. These include an independent commissioner, establishing a national compensation scheme for victims, and a mandatory supply chain reporting requirement for companies with profits over \$50 million with penalties for those who do not report in the second year.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Ged Kearney:

“The committee has recommended many initiatives which we have campaigned for including a labour hire licensing scheme, changes to Australia’s visa framework and due diligence requirements.”

“However, before the committee released its final report, the Turnbull Government made it clear that they would not support penalties, the reporting threshold would be as high as \$100 million and that they had no intention of changing the visa system.”

“The government’s proposal to ask companies to report without any penalties for failing to do so will not change the culture of employers who are happy to turn a blind eye to what is happening in their supply chains.”

“Many Australians are aware of the abuse, exploitation and slavery- like practices in many industries in this country, and there are thousands of victims who are too scared to tell their story.”

“Multiple submissions made to the Inquiry recommended penalties for not reporting, as the evidence arising from the UK Modern Slavery Act clearly shows that companies will not act until there are consequences.”

“Legislation should drive companies to comply with the basic demands of due diligence. An Act with no penalties will not achieve this modest goal.”

“We urge the Government to take seriously the recommendations of its own committee and implement these initiatives immediately.”

ENDS

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