

Thursday, 16 July 2026

Unions welcome tough new laws to combat modern slavery

Australian Unions welcome the Albanese Government's announcement to legislate a new criminal offence for large companies that fail to prevent modern slavery in their supply chains, a long-overdue reform that will improve corporate accountability and help prevent labour exploitation.

The strengthened laws are a significant step towards stamping out slavery, forced labour and debt bondage. It will help ensure that responsible businesses are not undercut by less scrupulous operators throughout domestic and international supply chains.

The new offence will apply to companies with annual revenue over \$100 million, with a defence available for companies that have taken reasonable steps to tackle modern slavery. This will reward responsible businesses while holding to account those that turn a blind eye.

Unions also welcome the Government's commitment to consult on the design of the new offence, including enforcement options and remedies for victims.

Unions see the need for the new criminal offence to be complemented by a civil right for workers and their unions to make a complaint against companies that fail to combat modern slavery in their supply chain, ensuring more effective enforcement.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President, Michele O'Neil:

"Modern slavery is a gross violation of human rights. An estimated 50 million people are trapped in modern slavery worldwide, and Australians rightly expect that the products they buy aren't made with slave labour.

"The Albanese Government's announcement is a significant positive step. Holding big companies accountable for preventing modern slavery in their supply chains is good for workers and good for the many Australian businesses that do the right thing.

"Unions welcome the consultation on the design of the new law. A standalone criminal offense will have limitations if it is solely up to police to enforce it, given the extent of this global issue.

"Workers and their unions also support a civil right for complaints against a company for failing to combat modern slavery in its supply chain.

"We look forward to working with the Government through the consultation to make these laws as strong and effective as possible."

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Media Contact: Cameron Warasta (0447) 159 467