



National Council of Churches in Australia

20 July 2018

Submission of the National Council of Churches in Australia to the Senate Legal & Constitutional Affairs Committee concerning the Modern Slavery Bill 2018.

Recently I was given a Cross which tells a powerful story.



The Cross comes from the Anglican Cathedral in Zanzibar. The Cathedral was built on the site of the former slave market in Stone Town.

Modern slavery has a long tragic history. Many fine people have sought to eradicate it over the years, including Christian reformers inspired by the hope of Jesus' death and Resurrection, symbolised by the empty Cross.

Notwithstanding many fine attempts to eradicate slavery, we are aware of the new forms of slavery, predatory and destructive as in past centuries. In this context it is timely that the Australian Government and Federal Parliament are considering legislation to eradicate modern forms of slavery, to hold perpetrators responsible and to prosecute those involved in criminal forms of exploitation.

We give our wholehearted support to this endeavour.

We urge the Parliament to pass a Modern Slavery Act with bi-partisan support before the end of the year.

The member Churches of the NCCA bring us many stories of vulnerable peoples' exploitation. These include the consequences of forced marriages and conversions, abuse of labour laws and various visa applications.

As ever, we are happy to bring more evidence and information when helpful to our common enterprise.

Anglican Church

Antiochian
Orthodox Church

Armenian
Apostolic Church

Assyrian Church
of the East

Chinese Methodist
Church

Churches of Christ

Congregational
Federation

Coptic
Orthodox Church

Greek
Orthodox Church

Indian
Orthodox Church

Lutheran Church

Mar Thoma Church

Religious Society
of Friends (Quakers)

Roman Catholic Church

Romanian
Orthodox Church

Syrian
Orthodox Church

The Salvation Army

Uniting Church

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Our international connections, including through partnerships with Pacific Council of Churches, Christian Conference of Asia and the World Council of Churches mean we are involved in endeavours to protect and prevent vulnerable people being criminally exploited.

Again, we can elaborate on those partnerships as may be helpful.

Personally, I have been involved in conferences and outcomes recently in Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Myanmar.

Earlier this month we lent our support to a recommendation from Mr Andrew Forrest. Below you can see a letter of mine to Fairfax Media in support of his recent opinion piece.

We request that the Modern Slavery Bill 2018 create a new statutory office on Modern Slavery; that this independent leadership role be in addition to the Business Engagement Unit proposed for within Home Affairs; and be the focal point for wide consultation with stakeholders on the current National Action Plan to 2020 and lead development of the next.

The proposed statutory office, similar to the UK's Modern Slavery Commissioner, would also be the lead in community education and business education about the new legislation and such education and awareness-raising is where faith-based organisations and faith communities like ours, with members across Australia and partners in the Asia and Pacific regions, will be key partners for businesses and government agencies.

With this brief submission may I re-affirm our readiness to meet with the Committee and elaborate our submission as may be helpful.

Yours sincerely,



Bishop Philip Huggins
President

Letter to Fairfax Media:

Dear Editor,

Andrew Forrest is giving outstanding leadership as regards eradicating modern slavery. (The Age, 3 July).

As he insists, the legislation before our Federal Parliament requires the addition of an Independent Modern Slavery Commissioner. That addition will ensure all the current good will is consistently implemented in the future.

The legislation will then be a partnership between Government and Business which is truly civilising: the most powerful looking after poor and vulnerable people!

Amidst much bleak daily news, this is wonderful national leadership!

Sincerely,

Bishop Philip Huggins.