



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops back efforts to eliminate modern slavery

Media Release

July 2, 2018

The Australian Catholic Bishops Conference has supported new legislation to help eradicate the scourge of modern slavery.

The ACBC has been advocating legislation to combat slavery for a number of years. The bishops acknowledged the long-term and expert work of Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH) and the Archdiocese of Sydney's Anti-Slavery Taskforce to achieve this outcome.

The Government introduced the *Modern Slavery Bill 2018* into the Australian Parliament last week. The Bill will require large organisations in Australia with annual revenue of at least \$100 million to report annually on their efforts to detect and eliminate slavery from their supply chains.

The Catholic bishops see the legislation as a first step in national efforts against slavery, with further work needed both to establish an independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner with the resources to drive efforts to eradicate modern slavery and hold large organisations accountable and to introduce human rights due diligence on all public sector procurement.

"Human dignity is the dignity unique to human beings and the basis of all human rights," said Archbishop Mark Coleridge, president of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

"This human dignity is possessed by each and every human being, irrespective of their age, sex, race, abilities, or any other quality. Slavery destroys that dignity."

Archbishop Coleridge said Pope Francis has provided international leadership – inside and outside the Catholic Church – as a powerful advocate for the eradication of modern slavery.

Pope Francis has said "modern slavery — in the form of human trafficking, forced labour, prostitution or the trafficking of organs — is a crime 'against humanity'. The victims of this are from every walk of life, but most are found among the poorest and the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters."

Two years ago, under Pope Francis' leadership, the Vatican committed to take action against human trafficking by slavery-proofing its own supply chains.

Last year, the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney made a similar commitment, announcing it too would slavery-proof its supply chains.

The Archdiocese has undertaken significant work to this end, developing expertise in this area. Other dioceses in Australia will be able to consult representatives of the Archdiocese of Sydney to support their own efforts to rid their supply chains of slavery.