

MEDIA RELEASE



Polding Centre
133 Liverpool Street
Sydney NSW 2000

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CATHOLIC INSTITUTIONS UNITE AT WORLD-FIRST ANTI- SLAVERY CONFERENCE.

Executives from over 40 Catholic institutions and agencies across Australia's health, aged care, education and social services sectors serving hundreds of thousands of people will come together at a world-first conference in Sydney, *Eradicating Modern Slavery from Catholic Supply Chains*.

The conference is convened to coincide with the United Nations World Day Against Trafficking in Persons on **30 July**. In 2017 Sydney Archbishop Most Rev Anthony Fisher OP committed his Archdiocese to reviewing and revising all relevant contractual and business practices to ensure they are slavery-free as part of a comprehensive anti-slavery program.

Under the new Australian Modern Slavery Act, entities with a consolidated annual revenue of more than \$100 million now must submit a public statement (Modern Slavery Statement) on what steps they are taking to identify and mitigate the risk of modern slavery and forced labour in supply chains.

The incoming Vice Chancellor of the University of Notre Dame Australia, Professor Francis Campbell, will be a special guest at the conference. Professor Campbell established St Mary's University 'Centre for the Study of Modern Slavery', served on the Advisory Board of the first United Kingdom Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Kevin Hyland who was also appointed by St Mary's as Honorary Professor.

Mr Alexander Coward from the Business Engagement Unit at the Department of Home Affairs will present a detailed explanation of the main provisions of the new legislation and guidelines for compliance, he will also answer questions entities may have about their obligations under the Modern Slavery Act. Mr Coward will also outline the Australian Government's approach to public procurement at the public register for Modern Slavery Statements.

Cambodian-born slavery survivor and author, Mr Vannak Anan Prum will speak on his graphic memoir which captures his experience of being trafficked on a fishing boat, escaping and then being sold again by his rescuers to slavery on a palm oil plantation.

The Chair of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney's Anti-Slavery Taskforce, John McCarthy QC said the conference is aimed at fostering closer collaboration across Catholic institutions in the united fight against modern slavery.

“Participants will benefit from case studies from organisations such as the Cleaning Accountability Framework and Ethical Clothing Australia which have put measures in place to deal with a problem which Pope Francis himself has described as a “scourge on the face of contemporary society”, Mr McCarthy said.

“We will be working together to help Catholic organisations lay a foundation for compliance, reporting and for a consistent approach to Modern Slavery Statements across the country”, he added.

The Sydney conference reflects calls by the Holy Father for Catholic organisations to take strong action to help rid the world of this great evil. Pope Francis convened religious leaders from around the world in 2014 to declare that modern slavery, human trafficking and forced labour are crimes against humanity and the present generation must end it.

The Chancellor of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences and Social Sciences and a principal associate of the Holy Father on the issue of slavery, Monsignor Marcelo Sanchez Sorondo has welcomed the Sydney conference, describing it as a role model for the Church in other countries to follow.

“With millions of people still victimised by modern forms of involuntary servitude, there is no time to waste. This upcoming conference highlights the moral imperative for Catholics around the world to work together to eradicate this evil practice”, Monsignor Sorondo said.

The conference is being convened by the Anti-Slavery Taskforce of the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney at the Polding Centre on **Tuesday 30 and Wednesday 31 July**.

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For further information/interviews: Michael Kenny Manager Communications & News Media Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney tel: (02) 9390 5348 mobile: 0438 046 406