



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC ANTI-SLAVERY NETWORK MEDIA RELEASE

McMILLAN REPORT PAVES THE WAY TO STRONGER MODERN SLAVERY RESPONSE

“The ball is now in the Government’s court”

26th May 2023

John McCarthy KC, former Australian Ambassador to the Holy See and prominent anti-slavery advocate with the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney, has welcomed the 30 recommendations contained in the *Report of the statutory review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth) The first three years - A report by Professor John McMillan AO*.

“The report picks up a number of ACAN’s constructive suggestions around the role and powers of an Anti-Slavery Commissioner – a position the current Government promised to create during last year’s Federal Election campaign,” Mr McCarthy said.

“In particular, I appreciate the recommendation to give the Anti-Slavery Commissioner the power to specify that certain goods or commercial activities be reported in Modern Slavery Statements as global issues arise.

“During the ACAN consultation with Professor McMillan, I conveyed the importance of the role of government procurement to drive improvements in supply chain transparency.

“Government agencies are among the largest purchasers of goods and services in the Australian economy, spending over \$80 billion per annum. Government is best-placed to drive improvements in supply chains and set higher standards for both business and suppliers to government.

“It is reassuring to read the report’s recommendations to Government, and see a number of measures advocated for in our ACAN submission,” Mr McCarthy said.

Other key recommendations are:

- the introduction of penalties for non-compliance, such as:
 - failure to submit a modern slavery statement within a reporting period
 - failure to submit a modern slavery statement that knowingly includes false information
 - failure to have a due diligence system
- lowering the reporting threshold for entities from \$100 million in revenue to \$50 million.

The report by Prof. McMillan has been tabled in the Federal Parliament, and the Government will consult further with stakeholders before formulating its response.

ACAN Executive Officer Alison Rahill said the ball is now in the Government’s court to follow through with effective measures to strengthen the Modern Slavery Act.



“The Act so far has been a force for good. It does however need a champion with the power to lead and facilitate industry and stakeholder collaboration. This is a significant role of the Commissioner, in line with the overarching principle that ‘Collaboration is key to combating modern slavery.’”

“I welcome greater government engagement on modern slavery. Our successful collaboration in ACAN between Catholic organisations across health and aged care, education, social services sectors, is a testament to what can be achieved when there is a will to work together.

“Catholic reporting entities can be reassured ACAN will support them in meeting any new challenges and obligations arising from future changes to the Act,” Ms Rahill said.

“As we work to eradicate modern slavery in all its forms from our operations and supply chains, let us strive to put the Catholic Church at the forefront of efforts to eradicate modern slavery nationally and globally in our generation,” Mr McCarthy said.

Link to the Report of the statutory review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018 (Cth):

<https://www.ag.gov.au/crime/publications/report-statutory-review-modern-slavery-act-2018-cth>

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Australian Catholic Anti-slavery Network: www.acan.org.au

Photo caption (Left to Right)

- Alison Rahill – ACAN Program Manager
- Carsten Primdal – ACAN Program Manager
- Professor John McMillan AO
- Jenny Stanger – ACAN Program Manager
- Chantelle Silva - Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Branch, Attorney-General’s Dept
- John McCarthy KC – Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney

