

**INQUIRY INTO MODERN SLAVERY ACT 2018 AND
ASSOCIATED MATTERS**

Organisation: Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia (ISCA)

Date Received: 26 September 2019



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Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia (ISCA) Submission to the Legislative Standing Committee Inquiry into the Modern Slavery Act, the Modern Slavery Amendment Bill and the Draft Regulation.

26 September 2019

As Australia's peak infrastructure sustainability body, ISCA's primary role is to help the Australian infrastructure sector create long lasting solutions and deliver better outcomes from a governance, social, economic and environmental perspective. Given this, ISCA strongly supports the introduction and intentions of the Modern Slavery Act 2018. The risk of modern slavery in the infrastructure sector is substantial, being exacerbated by long, complex and often international supply chains that feed infrastructure growth here in Australia. From sourcing raw materials, through to procuring offshore workers to supplement our domestic construction workforce, slavery-related risks are real.

Although the opportunity to tackle and eliminate slavery in the sector is within reach, there remain significant obstacles to realising this. Awareness, understanding and education around modern slavery risks in the sector remain comparatively rudimentary, particularly as we drop below tier one contractors. Education of the construction and infrastructure sector about Modern Slavery is important and requires increased focus and resources. ISCA is one of several key industry bodies actively addressing this through a range of knowledge-sharing initiatives with key stakeholders in the sector. One example is an ISCA-led Coalition of key roads sector organisations to collectively map out a considered and informed response to the federal Modern Slavery Act. This Coalition of government and private sector bodies, recognises the importance of this new legislation in helping stamp out modern slavery in the extended supply chains of the road infrastructure area.

While the Modern Slavery legislation is focused on reporting, ISCA believes it also provides organizations with a framework for modern slavery risk management in practice. A NSW government-supported industry response to preventing and addressing involvement in modern slavery will help achieve more meaningful and lasting results, and ideally place less of a burden on individual proponents, contractors, operators and suppliers, especially SMEs, in doing so. One of the key challenges for the sector is what organizations should do when they suspect or find Modern Slavery in their supply chains. To address this requires a range of actions in the sector such as having clear government policy and supporting infrastructure proponents, constructors and operators in setting and socializing clear expectations for their suppliers in relation to modern slavery. Frameworks to effectively engaging suppliers around their modern slavery risks are needed, as well as tools for internal and external awareness-raising and developing sound risk management approaches that identify and prioritise supply chain areas for assessment and mitigation measures.

ISCA is only a part of the solution for the sector, and there are aspects to Modern Slavery that go beyond what ISCA can deliver on its own. These include access to proper remedies for victims of Modern Slavery, which needs careful consideration at State and Federal level and more long-term funding. More work also needs to be done to clarify the Australian Government Modern Slavery Act 2018, the NSW Act, their application and differences for the infrastructure sector and for industry more broadly.

ISCA welcomes and supports the actions taken by the NSW government to date, but also firmly believes there is much more that can be done by government together with industry to stamp out this pernicious practice.