

**Submission
No 50**

INQUIRY INTO MODERN SLAVERY ACT 2018 AND ASSOCIATED MATTERS

Organisation: Australian Association of Social Work NSW Branch

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CONSULTATION ON THE Inquiry into the Modern Slavery Act 2018 and associated matters

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About the Australian Association of Social Workers

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) is the professional body representing over 11,000 social workers throughout Australia. We are the peak organisation for professional education and practice in social work, and have a strong voice on matters of human rights, social inclusion, social justice, as well as issues that impact upon the quality of life of all Australians.

The New South Wales Branch represents a significant proportion of the national membership. Our members are employed in a range of roles, from government, non-government organisations, education, public policy to private practice, in areas spanning from family violence, child protection, mental health, justice, occupational health, homelessness, disability and aged care.

This submission has been produced by the Australian of Association of Social Workers NSW Branch Suite 501, Level 5, 24 Hunter St ,Parramatta NSW 2150

Website: <https://www.aasw.asn.au/new-south-wales>

The social work profession

The social work profession is committed to pursuing social justice and human rights for all people. Principles of social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversity are central to the profession, and are underpinned by theories of social work, social sciences, humanities and Indigenous knowledges. Professional social workers consider the relationship between biological, psychological, social, and cultural factors and how they influence a person's health, wellbeing and development.

Social workers work with individuals, families, groups and communities. They maintain a dual focus on improving human wellbeing and identifying and addressing any external issues (known as systemic or structural issues) that detract from wellbeing, such as inequality, injustice and discrimination.

The Modern Slavery Legislation

This submission refers to points, h) the preferred course of action to address the matters identified, and (i) any other related matter to the Standing Committee on Social Issues on the Modern Slavery Act 2018 (NSW) and the consultation of the draft Modern Slavery Bill (2019).

Currently there are currently estimates of 40 million people entrapped in Modern Slavery according to the International Labour Organisation. The amount of people entrapped currently in slavery, is a stain on our society. Slavery is a heinous abuse of human rights and a major health concern due to its significant negative impacts on a persons' physical, emotional and psychosocial wellbeing.

Contemporary industrial laws are unable to keep up with the rapid change in technological changes, the gig-economy, flexible working conditions, and the growing rate of precarious working conditions. Modern slavery today can be a worker on a farm, a sex worker, forced marriage, but the lines are continually being blurred with today's current working conditions, wage theft and lack of protections, especially in the hospitality and gig economy.

New South Wales as the 7th largest economy in the Asia Pacific region has the opportunity with the Modern Slavery Act 2018 to have the leading legislation on Modern Slavery world-wide. The Act will have a direct impact on the lives of many of thousands of people entrapped in modern slavery.

In light of these concerns, The Australian Association of Social Workers puts forward our view for course of action and other matters.

1. It is essential that the act is passed without amendments to ensure many more people will be granted a free life and be able to have their basic human rights restored.
2. We are aware of the impact this Legislation is likely to have on business, therefore workers in NSW. It is however more crucial that at this time we think of the moral imperative of ensuring that our economy is not benefiting from unpaid work of children and adults who are deprived of all basic human rights.
3. We must continue being world leaders. This legislation is set to be the most progressive legislation in the world to tackle the issue of modern slavery. We should be an examples to other cities, states and countries that change is not only possible, but beneficial.
4. It is imperative that the senate acts to enact this legislation without amendment. The government has a commitment to the members of the parliament who passed this legislation and to the many people trapped in slavery in the supply chains of NSW businesses to enact a strong Modern Slavery Bill. The future of thousands of innocent children, women and men depend on it.