

**Submission  
No 10**

## **INQUIRY INTO REVIEW OF THE MODERN SLAVERY ACT 2018**

**Organisation:** The Freedom Hub Ltd.

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# Submission to the NSW Parliament's Modern Slavery Committee review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018.

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## About the Freedom Hub

The Freedom Hub is a non-profit organisation with the goal to ;

1. To end slavery in Australia;
2. Help victims of this crime rebuild their life; and
3. Partner in the fight to end global slavery.

Our unique feature is that we run our business in order to provide funds that support the Freedom Hub Survivor School. Our Survivor School supports survivors of modern slavery across Australia to receive long-term support throughout their rehabilitation process.

In our Survivor School, we provide support to survivors of different forms of modern slavery experienced in Australia including those who have experienced sexual violence through commercial sex exploitation, servitude, and forced marriage.

As a social enterprise, we have become renowned for our ethical procurement policies and collaborative partnerships with businesses who have ethical values. Our strong focus is on helping others develop corporate ethical skills and run their business accordingly.

We have been running our business since 2014. Because of this success, we are proud recipients of the 2019 Sydney City Regional Business Award for Excellence in Social Enterprise and the 2022 Third Sector Awards Social Entrepreneur of the Year.

Our corporate advisory services, café, catering, and event venue not only raise funds, but also become a focal point for community involvement and awareness.

## Preliminary comments

For the purpose of this review, the Freedom Hub would like to respond as a survivor service provider.

The most pervasive myth of modern day slavery is that Australia is low risk, therefore we should not prioritise the domestic response. The Freedom Hub, and our community of passionate

advocates and NGOs, work with survivors who experienced slavery, coercion, and severe exploitation within Australia and New South Wales.

Recognising the issue is the first step, NSW can lead the world by prioritising the remediation of survivors through a combination of criminal justice and civil society mechanisms. However, these need to be reviewed and reformed as to not penalise or retraumatise people with lived experience who have survived complex forms of violence, including sexual violence and forced marriage.

## **Support for frontline workers directly engaging with victims and survivors of slavery**

Working with people with complex forms of trauma, which is common in cases of modern slavery, requires a unique skill set to provide trauma informed care in addition to an understanding about how trauma impacts the brain and behaviour.

Professional staff and volunteers working in our Survivor School develop an understanding of client needs. They have unique insights about how policy changes in the criminal justice and social security services will impact survivors, and they become vital advocates in raising community awareness by sharing their experience working with the Survivor School, an alternative to sharing case studies.

The NSW government and the Office of the Anti-Slavery Commissioner has engaged with NGOs in the anti-slavery movement. Knowledge sharing and storytelling is important for developing community focused policy, however with the increased operating expenses in the context of rising cost of living, we believe the NSW government should reevaluate how organisations are compensated for their expertise.

We recommend that this take a survivor/client focused approach, mapping the contact points different organisations and nonprofits have with survivors of modern slavery, the nature of the support they provide, and the nature of information sharing. Providing financial compensation for organisations has multiple benefits including;

- Support services delivery;
- Maintain relationships with key information stakeholders; and
- Invest in creating formal evidence-based procedures.

In addition, the data collected by service providers should consider a broader range of qualitative indicators to measure success. This could include positive wellbeing indicators, engagement in the community, reduction in negative mental health outcomes, and self evaluations from survivors regarding personal improvement, knowledge, and implementation of key life skills.

## **Encourage collaboration from a broad range of survivor stakeholders**

Survivors are the key stakeholder in Australia's modern slavery response, and their lived experience is vital for the evolution and accountability of Australia's policy response. NSW's Modern Slavery Advisory Panel is a leading example of bringing people with lived experience, academic experience, and industry experience to collaborate on a key policy issue.

We believe that the NSW government can further develop its collaboration with survivors by creating pathways for people who do not consent to publicly identify as a survivor of slavery. This can allow opportunities for survivors to engage through writing or third parties to provide insights in a psychologically safe environment.

Broadening access to advisory and policy engagement should also consider the culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities through the use of translation and interpreter services.

The Freedom Hub's Survivor Advisory Board is designed to provide trauma-informed care resources to its members while maintaining members' privacy, with the goal of lowering the risk of retraumatisation.

This can also allow for specific engagement with stakeholders who experienced a broader range of exploitation, such as adults who have experienced forced marriage. And we can facilitate insight sharing that engage with their ideas and their remediation.

## **Interdisciplinary response to identify survivors**

Finally, we recommend that the Anti-Slavery Commissioner be supported to engage a broader range of grassroots non-government organisations across the refuge and domestic, family, and sexual violence sectors.

Any of these sectors and service providers intersect with survivors of modern slavery, but may not have the required awareness or training to identify survivors and link them to remediation services.

The commissioners office has an opportunity to promote a interdisciplinary, collaborative approach to connect NGOs that engage with the same communities in order to share contacts, clearly identify their functions, and be able to share a simplified and translated summary to the clients.