



**Australian  
BORDER FORCE**

## **National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020-24: Public Consultation Paper**

There are an estimated 45.8 million people living in slave-like conditions throughout the world. Two-thirds of these people are in the Indo-Pacific region. While Australia has a strong track record of domestic and international action to combat modern slavery, we are not untouched by these crimes.

Australia opposes modern slavery wherever it occurs. The Australian Government is committed to taking action to eradicate modern slavery, and to protect and support victims of these crimes.

This is why Australia has a comprehensive, whole-of-government strategy to combat modern slavery, through its *National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery 2015-19* (2015-19 Plan).

To maintain and build on Australia's robust framework to combat modern slavery, the Australian Government is developing the next five-year *National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020-24* (2020-24 Plan).

The 2020-24 Plan will build on the achievements of the 2015-19 Plan, and align with Australia's domestic laws and international obligations. It will reflect legislative and policy developments over the last five years and highlight new initiatives to combat modern slavery in Australia and abroad. These developments include increased international action on modern slavery in global business supply chains and work to support effective implementation of Australia's world-leading *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (Cth).

### **Request for public submissions**

The Government is committed to ensuring that the 2020-24 Plan reflects emerging issues and trends and a whole-of-community perspective. This Consultation Paper provides an important opportunity for the business community, civil society and academia to help design a 2020-24 Plan that will effectively drive Australia's efforts to combat modern slavery over the next five years.

The Australian Government welcomes feedback on this Consultation Paper, by way of written submissions, on the key goals of the 2020-24 Plan. Consultation questions are included to guide feedback. However, stakeholders may also provide further information and suggestions. Your submissions may be published on the Department of Home Affairs' website, unless you request otherwise.

Submissions can be sent to [humantraffickingandslavery@abf.gov.au](mailto:humantraffickingandslavery@abf.gov.au)

**The closing date for submissions is 31 January 2020.**

## Background

### What is modern slavery?

In Australia, modern slavery refers to a range of serious exploitative practices, including human trafficking, slavery, and slavery-like practices (such as forced labour, servitude, debt bondage, deceptive recruiting for labour or services, and forced marriage). While these crimes all have different elements, they all involve the manipulation of complex relationships between an offender and a victim, and can result in the serious undermining of the victim's personal freedom and ability to make choices for themselves. This can be through the use of physical threats or psychological coercion, because they are treated as property, or, in some cases, because they are literally bought or sold. Modern slavery practices are serious crimes that fundamentally curtail freedom, making them amongst the most grave of human rights violations.

### Modern slavery in Australia

From July 2015 to June 2017, the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) and the Walk Free Foundation estimated that there were up to 1,900 victims of modern slavery in Australia. The research examined the hidden nature of these crimes and estimated that for every victim detected by authorities in Australia, four remain undetected.

Historically, a significant proportion of trafficked people identified by Australian authorities have been women from Asia who have been exploited within the sex industry. Over time, Australian authorities have identified more diverse groups of victims by gender and country of origin. These victims have often been exploited in a range of industries, including hospitality and agriculture. Many victims in Australia have also been exploited within intimate and family relationships through forced marriage.

### Australia's response

Australia has had a comprehensive, whole-of-government response to combatting modern slavery in place since instituting the *Action Plan to Eradicate Trafficking in Persons* on 1 January 2004.

Major initiatives the Australian Government has undertaken to strengthen our response to modern slavery include:

- comprehensively criminalising modern slavery practices, with penalties of up to 25 years' imprisonment
- introducing the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* to harness business leverage to combat modern slavery in global supply chains
- creating specialist teams in the Australian Federal Police to investigate modern slavery cases
- delivering a Government-funded victim support program that provides individualised case management support
- establishing a Human Trafficking Visa Framework to allow victims and witnesses to remain in Australia to receive support and participate in investigations and prosecutions
- collaborating with civil society, business and academia through biannual meetings of the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery, the Government's key consultative mechanism on modern slavery issues
- providing over \$6.2 million in Government funding since 2008 to non-government organisations working to combat modern slavery
- driving greater cooperation and coordination to combat modern slavery internationally and in the region, including through co-chairing the Bali Process with Indonesia, and
- continuing a 15-year history of investing in the criminal justice response to human trafficking in the Indo-Pacific region, most recently through the \$80 million *ASEAN-Australia Counter-Trafficking Program 2018-28*.

## Proposed goals of the 2020-24 Plan

The Government has consulted members of the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery to review Government efforts under the 2015-19 Plan. These consultations have helped to identify emerging issues and areas of focus for Government action.

Through these consultations, the Government has identified twelve proposed goals for the 2020-24 Plan. These proposed goals build on the Government's efforts under the 2015-19 Plan. They address the full cycle of exploitation, from recruitment to reintegration, and aim to give equal weight to the critical areas of prevention, enforcement and victim support.

Under the proposed goals, Australia will:

1. maintain and promote compliance with international standards on modern slavery
2. engage the Australian community to understand and combat modern slavery
3. promote an evidence-based response to modern slavery
4. maintain a robust and comprehensive legislative framework to combat modern slavery
5. train frontline officials to support the identification of victims and effective investigations of modern slavery
6. progress effective prosecutions to secure convictions against offenders
7. enhance our response to combat forced marriage
8. enhance our response to combating serious forms of labour exploitation, including forced labour and deceptive recruiting
9. promote transparency and accountability for combating modern slavery risks in global supply chains, including in Government procurement
10. provide appropriate support, protections and remedies to empower victims of modern slavery
11. enhance our leadership and partnerships to promote regional and international cooperation on combating modern slavery, and
12. work collaboratively across government, along with non-government stakeholders, to combat modern slavery.

## Consultation questions

The Australian Government welcomes feedback on any aspect of this Consultation Paper. We are particularly interested in the community's views on the following consultation questions:

1. Do the 12 goals capture key areas of focus for Australia over the next five years?
2. Should there be additional goals to address other areas of focus, emerging issues or trends? If so, what should they be?
3. The Government is committed to ensuring victims of modern slavery are supported, protected and empowered. Are there ways in which the Government can better reflect the voices of victims and their lived experiences in the 2020-24 Plan and Australia's response to modern slavery?
4. The Government is committed to ensuring that we can measure the impacts of the 2020-24 Plan. Are there evaluation methods, data sources or metrics the Government should consider in developing an evaluation framework?

Feedback provided on the Consultation Paper and through other consultations will help to inform development of a draft National Action Plan. There will be opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback on the draft National Action Plan, including through a series of stakeholder consultation roundtables that the Government will convene in the first half of 2020.