
Dear Minister,

We call on the New Zealand government to commence a government inquiry into a Modern Slavery Act for New Zealand business and public sector supply chains.

Walk Free and the International Labour Organization's 2017 Global Estimates of Modern Slavery estimates that 40.3 million people are living in conditions of modern slavery, a crime from which no country is immune. In a globalised world where we have complex and diverse supply chains, combined with a lack of transparency and weak enforcement protections, modern slavery has been able to thrive. In fact, modern slavery can be found within almost every sector, region, and industry. The economic and social consequences associated with the COVID-19 pandemic have and will continue to further exacerbate the risk of modern slavery for vulnerable workers globally. As part of our COVID-19 recovery, we need to set standards that benefit all stakeholders across the supply chain.

Numerous governments around the world have already introduced legislative changes to address modern slavery, however, these countries cannot solve modern slavery on their own. Like-minded countries such as New Zealand – countries that prioritise ethics and sustainability – must similarly show leadership and act to end modern slavery.

Many New Zealand companies have already begun to address these issues under legislation that is increasingly being implemented around the world. Modern Slavery Acts are deliberately designed to encourage collaboration. Where modern slavery is found, sectors can work together to find creative, commercial, and long-lasting solutions.

Modern slavery goes against our kiwi values. New Zealand's identity as a nation is built on kindness, fairness, equality, and sustainability. As New Zealand continues to trade on these credentials, showing leadership on addressing modern slavery through ensuring its companies and public sector are meeting global labour rights standards, becomes more important.

We the undersigned, therefore, call on the New Zealand government to commence a government inquiry into a Modern Slavery Act for New Zealand business and public sector supply chains.

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