

To the Honourable Speaker and Members of the House of Representatives assembled in Parliament

This petition of certain citizens of Australia draws to the attention of the House:

Research by the US Department of Labor and UN bodies has identified goods being imported into Australia where slavery and human trafficking have been involved in their production. These goods include cocoa, seafood, clothing, bricks and rugs from some countries.

While it is an offence for any Australian company to engage in any financial transaction involving a slave, regardless of where it occurs in the world, no effort is currently made to identify Australian companies importing goods that involve the use of slavery in their production.

As citizens of Australia we should be able to purchase goods without having to do our own extensive research to determine if the goods are free of slavery and human trafficking.

Your petitioners therefore ask the House to:

1. Introduce legislation that requires:
 - (a) Government to undertake research to identify goods imported into Australia where there is a risk slavery or human trafficking have been involved in their production.
 - (b) Industries, where this risk exists, to take all reasonable steps to minimise the possibility of slavery or human trafficking being involved in the production of goods they import.
2. Amend the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* and the 'Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines' to require suppliers to provide guarantees that their supply chains are free of slavery and human trafficking.

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Return to: STOP THE TRAFFIK Australia ,c/- 130 Little Collins Street, Melbourne 3000 - by Friday 30 March 2012.

Calling for a Slavery Free Guarantee!!

Ever since we'd left Thailand my friend had been seasick, and he was not familiar with the work. The skipper didn't like him at all. My friend couldn't speak Thai, so he couldn't understand what the skipper told him. Water was running around the deck and a squid dropped out of the basket. The captain shouted for him to pick it up, but he didn't understand. Then, the squid was washed overboard.

The skipper just came down and hit him with a pipe. My friend raised his hand against the first blow and his hand broke. The second blow smashed his shoulder blade. Then he hit the back of his head. He fell to the deck. There were other Thai workers near him. The skipper dropped the pipe, washed his hands and went back up to the wheelhouse. He ordered his people to throw him into the water. He was still alive. When he went back to the wheelhouse, the skipper took the loudhailer and warned everyone: 'What are you looking at? Get back to work. If you want to end up like him, then behave like him!'

Account of a former trafficked crewman on a Thai fishing boat¹. Some Australian seafood companies import seafood from Thailand

Modern Day Slavery

Despite campaigns stretching back to the 1800's slavery continues to exist today. Slavery or human trafficking is involved in the production of goods such as cocoa, seafood, bricks, clothing, rugs and palm oil in some countries. These goods are being exported and sold around the world including in Australia.

International Treaties, Laws and Voluntary Codes

A number of international treaties attempt to address this issue together with laws in the countries where these goods are produced but adequate enforcement of both laws and treaties is often lacking. Voluntary industry and corporate codes often make a commitment to providing goods free from slavery yet these also fall short in the area of monitoring and enforcement.

Australian Law

Australia is lagging behind a number of other developed consumer countries, most notably the US, in taking actions to encourage companies to ensure the goods they import and sell are free from slavery and human trafficking. Australian law recognises that slavery and human trafficking are serious offences wherever they occur but it has failed to offer any incentive for companies selling imported goods in Australia to ensure slavery and human trafficking have not been involved in the production of goods they are importing.

The failure of these treaties, laws and voluntary codes makes Australian consumers complicit in modern day slavery.

Options to Combat Slavery in Goods Imported to Australia

A range of options are available to ensure that goods imported into Australia are not made using slavery or human trafficking. First the government needs to identify those goods where there is a reasonable risk that slavery or human trafficking may have been involved in the production of the goods.

Companies could be required to report on the steps they are taking to minimise the risk of slavery and trafficking within their supply chain. They could also be required to audit the production of the goods to ensure they are slavery free.

Also, the government could demonstrate leadership on this issue by not purchasing goods itself where companies have failed to demonstrate adequate action to minimise the risk of slavery or human trafficking in their production. Although the Australian Government currently has ethical standards in place for its purchasing, no specific standard addresses trafficked or slave labour in the production of goods.

Calling for a Slavery Free Guarantee

Consumers have a right to believe our government has required all reasonable steps from companies to ensure the goods on store shelves are free of slavery and human trafficking in their production. The measures outlined above would be a start to ensuring this outcome.

¹ David Browne, "Murder at sea", ITF Seafarers' Bulletin 2009, p.28