



1 June 2020

The Hon Jason Wood MP

Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs

PO Box 539

Berwick, VIC, 3806

By email: Jason.Wood.MP@aph.gov.au

CC: slavery.consultations@abf.gov.au

Dear Assistant Minister Wood

Recent appointments to the Modern Slavery Expert Advisory Group

We, the undersigned civil society organisations and unions, write to express our concern regarding the alarming absence of union or civil society representation in the Department of Home Affairs' newly established Modern Slavery Expert Advisory Group (**Expert Advisory Group**).

The Expert Advisory Group is intended to be a world-leading initiative to inform the Australian Government's response to combatting modern slavery. Now, more than ever, as the COVID-19 pandemic sweeps across the globe, creating mass unemployment and heightened risks of labour exploitation, the need for the Government's approach to be informed by those working directly with workers at risk is critical.

Seventy people, including many of the leading experts in this field from unions, academia and civil society organisations, nominated for the Expert Advisory Group. Yet the appointments announced last week overwhelmingly represent business interests.

Six out of the ten appointments are from large Australian companies. Three of the five permanent members of the group – the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Australian Industry Group and the Business Council of Australia, also directly represent the interests of business and a fourth (the Global Compact Network for Australia) is predominantly a network of Australian business. There are no representatives from either the Australian Council of Trade Unions, individual unions or broader civil society organisations including human rights or anti-slavery organisations.

This leads to the disturbing result that Australia's efforts in combatting modern slavery will be driven by companies that are subject to Australia's modern slavery laws, rather than the interests of people at risk of modern slavery.

We urgently request that further appointments be made to the Expert Advisory Group from unions and civil society organisations to ensure balanced representation in informing the Australian Government in its approach to eradicating modern slavery in supply chains.

Yours faithfully

Human Rights Law Centre

Australian Council of Trade Unions

United Workers Union

Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania

Be Slavery Free

Transparency International Australia

Business and Human Rights Resource Centre

Australasian Centre for Corporate Responsibility (ACCR)

Australian Lawyers for Human Rights

Salvation Army

Action Aid

RMIT Business and Human Rights Centre

Victorian Trades Hall Council

Professor Justine Nolan, University of New South Wales

Professor Fiona Haines, University of Melbourne

Dr Martijn Boersma, University of Technology Sydney

Adjunct Professor Holly Cullen, University of Western Australia

Dr Alice de Jonge, Monash University

Dr Fiona McGaughey, University of Western Australia

Dr Annie Delaney, RMIT University

Dr Pichamon Yeophantong, UNSW Canberra at the Australian Defence Force Academy