



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES



**THE SENATE**

**PROOF**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Petition: Modern Slavery Legislation**

**SPEECH**

**Tuesday, 13 November 2018**

BY AUTHORITY OF THE SENATE

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## SPEECH

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| <b>Page</b> 82                        | <b>Proof</b> Yes     |
| <b>Questioner</b>                     | <b>Responder</b>     |
| <b>Speaker</b> Wong, Sen Penny        | <b>Question No.</b>  |

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**Senator WONG** (South Australia—Leader of the Opposition in the Senate) (19:20): Yesterday I joined with Labor's shadow minister for justice, Ms Clare O'Neil MP, to receive a petition signed by tens of thousands of people from around the world who are calling on the Australian parliament to be a global leader against slavery by enacting a strong and effective modern slavery law. Presenting the petition was Fuzz Kitto, the national co-director of STOP THE TRAFFIK; and members of its Australian coalition. As some senators may be aware, STOP THE TRAFFIK is a coalition of over 30 organisations working together to prevent, disrupt and abolish modern slavery. STOP THE TRAFFIK has been actively engaging with members and senators on all sides of politics, as well as with business, industry, non-government organisations and consumers, regarding a modern slavery act for Australia. The petition, which I'll shortly present to the Senate tonight, is signed by 52,719 people from around Australia and the world, coordinated by Freedom United. It reads:

We commend the Australian Parliament for taking bold first steps toward creating a modern slavery law that could greatly impact the lives of millions of people working under conditions of forced labour.

We know all too well that many workers in Asia endure forced labour to bring us the garments, foods, electronics and other goods we enjoy. With nearly half of Australia's imports coming from the Asia Pacific, where an estimated 30 million people are living in slavery, you have an opportunity to ensure the law is strong, protects victims and holds businesses accountable.

Please don't let this be a missed opportunity to make a real impact on the global slavery problem. We urge the Australian government to be a regional and global leader against slavery by proposing a strong and effective modern slavery law that:

Ensures victims of slavery are provided their entitled human rights protections;

Establishes an accessible and centralized way for companies to report on modern slavery;

Sets a reporting requirement for all companies with a revenue of at least \$25m, with an effective way to ensure compliance;

Covers government procurement; and

Appoints an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to make sure the law is implemented well.

Labor leads on the issue of modern slavery. Over a year ago we committed to a modern slavery act with penalties and an independent anti-slavery commissioner, an announcement warmly greeted by business, union and civil society stakeholders. Whilst Labor believe there are improvements that could be made to the Modern Slavery Bill, we do call on the government to bring this bill on for debate in the Senate, as it is vitally important for it to pass into law without further delay. Australia has an important role to play in fighting modern slavery. There are an estimated 40.3 million people in slavery worldwide, many of whom are victims of exploitation in private sector activities such as manufacturing, construction and agriculture. As mentioned in the text of the petition, almost two-thirds of people trapped in slavery worldwide are reported to be in the Asia-Pacific region, and it is estimated that there are thousands of people who are currently trapped in slavery right here in Australia.

As Leader of the Opposition in the Senate and shadow minister for foreign affairs I'm grateful for the opportunity to present this petition to the Senate on a critical global human rights issue. I also acknowledge again the work of STOP THE TRAFFIK and the work of the shadow minister for justice, Ms Clare O'Neil, and her staff, who have worked so hard to bring this issue to the forefront of national attention. I seek leave to table a nonconforming petition.

Leave granted.

**Senator WONG:** I table the petition and thank the Senate.