

Reducing modern slavery in our supply chains



What is modern slavery?

'Modern slavery' describes situations where offenders use coercion, threats or deception to exploit victims and undermine their freedom. Practices that constitute modern slavery can include: human trafficking, slavery, servitude, forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, and the worst forms of child labour.

At any given time in 2016, an estimated 40.3 million people were in modern slavery, including 24.9 million in forced labour and 15.4 million in forced marriage. Women and girls are disproportionately affected by forced labour, being 99% of victims in the commercial sex industry, and 58% in other sectors.

Why does it matter in Australia?

We might think slavery is something that just happens in developing countries, and while it is more prevalent in these places, it is something that is known to exist even here in Australia.

Further, when we purchase products in Australia that have been produced in other countries, or where the components of those products are mined or produced in other countries, we may be indirectly supporting modern slavery that occurs in those supply chains. It is therefore important that we ask questions about where products are produced, by who, and under what conditions.

Modern Slavery and the Uniting Church in Australia

The Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) has long lobbied for enhanced supply chain transparency and decent conditions for all workers across the globe.

In the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, our Justice and International Mission Cluster (JIM Cluster) has been a key proponent in advocating for modern slavery reporting requirements to be introduced in Australia. The JIM Cluster even provided input in drafting the legislation that is now in place, the Modern Slavery Act 2018. Under this legislation, the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania has prepared and submitted a joint Modern Slavery Statement with its related entities.

The poster overleaf, provides some information and practical tips on steps that everyone can take as part of their purchasing decisions to reduce the risk of modern slavery.



Practical tips for reducing modern slavery risks

The below information and practical tips have been provided to help you make informed purchasing decisions and reduce the risk of modern slavery in your supply chains.

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From small things, big things grow

Even small decisions and actions can result in a large cumulative effect. If we all take steps to reduce our own impact, then collectively we can create significant change.



If it seems too good to be true...

If a product seems unrealistically cheap, then it likely is. To provide cheap products, costs must be saved somewhere in the supply chain, and too often wages are where cost cutting is applied.



Buy local

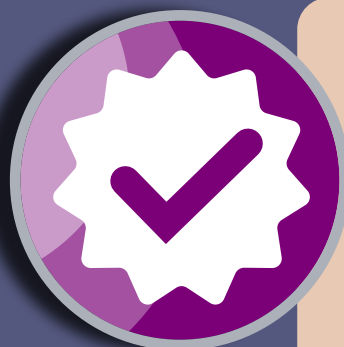
Purchasing/consuming products and services that are manufactured locally helps because the supply chains are shorter, and it is easier to establish exactly how a product was actually made.



Assist in assessing modern slavery risks

To reduce modern slavery in our supply chains, it is important to understand the products and services purchased where modern slavery risks might exist. As such, questions on your congregations purchasing and spend on 'higher risk' products will be included in the annual financial survey.

Your reporting will allow the Synod to assess the risks of modern slavery in our supply chains and take action to address them.



Where possible, look for accredited products

There are some third party bodies that provide ethical accreditation for products. Accreditations to look for include Fair Trade, Rainforest Alliance and Ethical Clothing.

You can also consult the online 'Shop ethical!-ethical buying guide' which provides ethical based ratings for a wide range of suppliers of common products. <https://www.ethical.org.au/theguide/>

If you'd like assistance or advice on purchasing decisions to reduce modern slavery risks, particularly around those products identified as being 'higher risk', please contact **Mark Zirnsak**, Senior Social Justice Advocate mark.zirnsak@victas.uca.org.au

