

MEDIA RELEASE



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NEW NATIONAL CATHOLIC NETWORK TO TACKLE MODERN SLAVERY

45 Catholic entities including dioceses, universities and organisations across the finance and investment, health, aged care and welfare sectors have so far joined a new national network aimed at promoting closer collaboration in the fight against Modern Slavery.

The new Australian Catholic Anti-Slavery Network (ACAN) was a recommendation from a national conference held in Sydney in July in which Catholic entities from across the country developed an action plan to comply with Australia's Modern Slavery Act.

The announcement comes on 2 December 2019- the United Nations International Day for the Abolition of Modern Slavery and 1st anniversary of the passing of the Modern Slavery Act through federal parliament

Under the federal legislation, entities with a consolidated annual revenue of more than \$100 million must provide a Modern Slavery Statement on what risks of modern slavery have been identified, the steps they are taking to ensure their supply chains are slavery-free and how effective those measures are. They have until December 2020 to comply with the new laws.

Through ACAN, Catholic entities will be able to access online resources to help them prepare Modern Slavery Statements through a central portal. They will also benefit from monthly meetings, newsletters, workshops and training programs to ensure they meet their obligations under the new laws.

The Catholic Archbishop of Sydney, Most Rev. Anthony Fisher OP has welcomed the new network in promoting action to eradicate modern slavery.

“As one of Australia's largest employers, the Catholic Church and its entities have considerable purchasing power and therefore power to deter profiteering from modern slavery. We simply can not afford to only pay lip service to the issue of modern slavery and trafficking. Pope Francis has himself described modern slavery as a scourge

on the face of contemporary society. I hope this network will help to play a role to bring about real, long term change”, Archbishop Fisher said.

According to the Global Slavery Index, more than 40 million people worldwide are victims of modern slavery, including 15,000 people in Australia alone. Modern slavery covers practices such as forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage and human trafficking.

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