

11 April 2025**Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner, Chris Evans**

Dear Commissioner Evans,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input into the development of a Strategic Plan for your Office.

We suggest the following should be priorities for your Strategic Plan:

- 1. Survivor wellbeing and engagement**
- 2. Mandatory due diligence in businesses' and government entities' supply chains**

These priorities directly relate to several of the Commissioner's functions, as set out in the *Modern Slavery Act 2018*.

Recommendations for priority 1 have been written by Sherry Wanjiru, Fair Futures' Lived Experience Advisor, and feature quotes from two sources:

- Interviews that Fair Futures conducted with six survivors of modern slavery in Australia in January 2024, where we sought to understand their views on the role of a potential Anti-Slavery Commissioner.¹
- A community survey conducted by Survivor Connections, with participation from twenty survivors who have interacted with the organisation.²

Recommendations for priority 2 are based on our experience working with businesses and government.

¹ Sherry Wanjiru and Fiona David, "Submission to the Inquiry into the Modern Slavery Amendment (Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner) Bill 2023" (Fair Futures, January 2024), <https://fairfutures.com/media/lrckoxtc/fair-futures-submission-antislavery-commissioner-bill-22-jan-2024.pdf>.

² "Action Summary and Survivor Community Survey: February 2023 - February 2025" (Survivor Connections, 2025), https://www.linkedin.com/posts/survivor-connections_action-surmmmary-and-survivor-community-survey-activity-7305747667198824448-aCIS?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAEM2W48BeP0OCPFnGILxp6l6KzfhUdeozlg.

Priority 1 - Survivor wellbeing and engagement

Specific function - MSA 20(d) “to support victims of modern slavery by providing information in relation to government and non-government resources, programs and services, including by developing and maintaining guidance material and making such material publicly available”

Quotes on this topic from survivors include the following:³

“When things go wrong in the modern slavery sector currently, there is nowhere to go as a survivor.”

“Response times from services often did not align with the urgency of time-sensitive needs.”

“It became very painful to even get my hopes up about someone actually helping.”

“Every survivor’s journey will look different, meaning that recovery is not a one-size-fits-all situation.”

Key objectives related to this function include the following:

- Survivors receive holistic, long-term support beyond emergency assistance
- Ensure easy access to information on government and non-government services to help victims of modern slavery navigate support options and resources available to them
- Host real-time updates on legal rights, housing options, and trauma-informed services
- Centralised Survivor-Centred Support Systems

Key actions to support this function include the following:

- Peer support programs are funded.
- Develop a comprehensive national framework for survivor support services
- Put measures in place to ensure continuous survivor/end-user or consumer feedback.
- Ensure easy access to information on government and non-government services to help victims of modern slavery navigate support options and resources available to them.
- Include multilingual capability (e.g.: chatbots) with crisis response capabilities

Key measures of progress to support this function include the following:

- Percentage of materials reviewed and approved by survivor advisory panel.
- Feedback from survivors on accessibility and usefulness of information (via surveys/interviews).

³ Taken from the two above sources.

- Long-term support gaps are filled, including housing, mental health services, visa pathways, and employment assistance.
- Percentage of survivors reporting successful connection to appropriate services.
- Response time metrics from initial contact to service delivery

Specific function - MSA 20(e) “to engage with, and promote engagement with, victims of modern slavery to inform measures for addressing modern slavery”

Quotes on this topic from survivors include the following:⁴

“Survivors should play an integral part in designing services.”

“Survivors should not be required to communicate through third parties.”

Key objectives related to this function include the following:

- Embed meaningful survivor participation in shaping policy and services.
- Strengthen prevention through awareness and oversight

Key actions to support this function include the following:

- Establish a National Survivor Advisory panel with lived experience experts compensated for their time and input.
- Conduct biannual community consultations with diverse survivor groups across states and territories.

Key measures of progress to support this function include the following:

- Number and diversity of survivor consultations conducted annually.
- Percentage of policy changes directly informed by survivor input.
- Annual reporting on survivor engagement outcomes and next steps.

Specific function - MSA 20(ma) “to engage with victims of modern slavery to inform and support the performance of the above functions”

Quotes on this topic from survivors include the following:⁵

“The whole system is broken, and we need to fix up the entire system.”

“The commissioner should prevent exploitation before it even happens by raising awareness and educating people immigrating to this country.”

“The role of the federal anti-slavery commissioner has the potential to unify our sector and have oversight.”

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

“Every survivor’s journey will look different, meaning that recovery is not a one-size-fits-all situation.”

“Sixty percent of participants cited that they reached out to peer support for help during crisis situations.”

“We have big gaps in research about where and how modern slavery happens in Australia.”

Key objectives related to this function include the following:

- Build trust and sustained relationships with survivor communities to strengthen all functions.

Key actions to support this function include the following:

- Establish a Survivor Advisory Council that meets quarterly with the Commissioner.
- Launch a national awareness campaign targeting vulnerable groups (e.g., visa holders, students, migrant workers)
- Set up a watchdog function: regularly monitor service gaps, collate survivor complaints and recommend systemic improvements.

Key measures of progress to support this function include the following:

- Engagement Framework developed and publicly launched.
- Number of peer-led projects supported annually.
- Survivor satisfaction metrics with engagement processes (collected anonymously).
- Measured awareness levels pre- and post- campaign (via surveys).

Priority 2 - Mandatory due diligence in businesses’ and government entities’ supply chains

Specific function - MSA 20(b) “to support Australian entities and entities carrying on business in Australia to address risks of modern slavery practices in their operations and supply chains, and in the operations and supply chains of entities they own or control”

Key objectives related to this function include the following:

- Large Australian entities and entities carrying on business in Australia are addressing risks in their supply chains through an effective due diligence process.
- Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are supported to begin resource-appropriate due diligence processes.

Key actions to support this function include the following:

- Facilitate collaboration between businesses on risk management including due diligence. As part of guidance issued in 2024, the ACCC has clarified that companies can collaborate for human rights improvements, including regarding anti-slavery conduct.⁶ Sharing findings on modern slavery risks as well as learnings on the due diligence process itself could be a key way for businesses to conduct thorough due diligence while reducing the resource burden.
- Advocate for the introduction of mandatory due diligence obligations for entities subject to the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* reporting requirements (including through the avenue of a potential upcoming Attorney-General Department’s review).
- Advocate for the introduction of penalties for non-compliance (including through the avenue of a potential upcoming Attorney General Department’s review).
- Work with the Attorney-General’s Department to provide clear, tailored guidance to SMEs on complying with the reporting requirements in a resource-appropriate manner.
- Facilitate due diligence collaboration between SMEs.

Key measures of progress to support this function include the following:

- Using the 3000+ statements in the statement repository, develop a maturity framework against which MSA statements and responses can be benchmarked, and companies can set targets.
- Track the number of reporting entities in different maturity categories and shifts “up” over time.
- The number of reporting entities that reference actual remediation efforts.
- The proportion of entities over the reporting threshold submitting their annual Modern Slavery Statements.
- The number of SMEs submitting voluntary annual Modern Slavery Statements.

Specific function - MSA 20(k) “to advocate to the Commonwealth Government on matters relating to modern slavery, including for continuous improvement in policy and practice”

Key objectives related to this function include the following:

- Federal public entities are actively managing modern slavery risk, including conducting due diligence where justified and remediating harms when found.

Key actions to support this function include the following:

- Give clear guidance to government agencies on what constitutes “high risk” so that scarce resources can be targeted appropriately.

⁶ “Sustainability Collaborations and Australian Competition Law: A Guide for Business” (Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, 2024), https://www.accc.gov.au/system/files/sustainability-collaborations-and-australian-competition-law-guide_1.pdf.

- Encourage a cultural shift to recognise that finding modern slavery harms needing remediation is a sign of *progress*, rather than one of failure.
- Advocate for a review of the Commonwealth Procurement Rules (CPRs) to ensure that modern slavery risk management is appropriately embedded into the procurement process, reflecting agency size and resources.

Key measures of progress to support this function include the following:

- Increasing collaboration across Federal agencies on procurement of high-risk products/services over time.
- Increasing quality and transparency of Federal reporting on its own procurement to align with corporate practice over time.

Fair Futures would welcome ongoing engagement in the consultation process and participation in the next phases of the strategic plan development.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to the development of this important Strategic Plan.

Yours sincerely,
Fiona David, on behalf of the Fair Futures team.