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Walk Free welcomes new Federal unit to support an Australian Modern Slavery Act

The Australian Government's commitment to support an Australian Modern Slavery Act with a new, well-funded unit is clear progress towards the Act's effective implementation, Walk Free Foundation chief executive Jenn Morris said.

On Thursday, the Federal Government announced \$3.6 million over four years would be provided to the Department of Home Affairs for a new Anti-Slavery Business Engagement Unit to manage Modern Slavery Reporting Requirements by large businesses.

Part of this task will be overseeing a publicly accessible central repository of businesses' Modern Slavery Statements, as well as providing support and advice to businesses on modern slavery risks.

The reporting requirements will be legislated as part of an Australian Modern Slavery Act, which is expected to be passed by Parliament before the end of the year.

"Pleasingly this announcement takes the Australian Modern Slavery Act beyond its precursor in the UK, which is currently the gold standard for modern slavery reporting, by including a central repository of Modern Slavery Statements," Ms Morris said.

"A central repository is one of three key priorities Walk Free called for in the development of Australia's Modern Slavery Act, as it will strengthen the effectiveness of reporting laws by monitoring companies' compliance and progress."

The Government's announcement it will publish an annual statement on Commonwealth procurement is applauded by Walk Free as a strong show of leadership in the fight against modern slavery. This important step in improving transparency is a world first.

Walk Free, as part of Minderoo Foundation, continues to call on Government to establish an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to oversee a coordinated response to eradicating modern slavery across all sectors – everything from victim support to enforcement.

Walk Free commends the Government for its continued commitment to introducing a Modern Slavery Act and looks forward to final legislation being introduced as an urgent priority to ensure Australia is doing all it can to protect the 40.3 million victims currently enslaved across the world today. – ENDS –

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