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Modern Slavery Act falls way short in current form

The peak body for working people has criticised aspects of the Turnbull Government's Modern Slavery Act bill, saying the proposed law falls short in important respects.

The bill lacks the necessary enforcement measures to ensure that companies investigate and act on the presence of slavery in their supply chains, because its lack of fines or any penalties turns it into a voluntary scheme by default.

It also fails to appoint an independent commissioner, which has been a key ingredient in ensuring proper monitoring takes place. Finally, the bill is silent on whether companies who have failed to investigate and take action on slavery in their supply chains will be able to bid for and receive government contracts.

The ACTU calls on the Turnbull Government to appoint an independent commissioner and to make reporting mandatory with penalties against companies who fail to comply, including exclusion from government contracts.

Quotes attributable to ACTU Secretary Sally McManus:

"The Turnbull Government's proposal lacks important tools that could be used in this act to fight modern slavery and make companies take action."

"Under this bill, companies that don't attempt to report what they have done to deal with slavery in their supply chains face no penalties. This sends the message that that they can get away with not taking this issue seriously.

"There must be an independent commissioner who can oversee and monitor the reporting. And companies that fail to report or submit false claims should be excluded from government procurement contracts.

"The ACTU calls on the government to enact a strong and effective Modern Slavery Act to eradicate this global scourge."

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