

MEDIA RELEASE

Ethical Clothing Australia
ethicalclothingaustralia.org.au

UN praises Ethical Clothing Australia for its role in stamping out modern slavery, calls for more to be done

The UN's leading expert on modern slavery has called out Ethical Clothing Australia as a strong example of on the ground efforts in Australia to prevent modern slavery.

The report was released following a country visit from the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences, Professor Tomoya Obokata.

He came to Australia last year as part of his UN appointed role in investigating and reporting on modern slavery around the world in a bid to prevent it from occurring.

Ethical Clothing Australia was one of only a very small number of organisations specifically mentioned in the report.

It recognised and acknowledged the importance of multi-stakeholder initiatives with proactive involvement from workers, trade unions, and other stakeholders to enhance worker empowerment and prevent labour exploitation.

National Manager Rachel Reilly said the recognition confirms the importance of work on the ground, directly with those most impacted by or at risk of modern slavery.

"We were grateful for the opportunity to meet with Professor Obokata and his team during their visit late last year and brief him alongside the Textile, Clothing and Footwear (TCF) Union and outworkers from the local industry," she said.

"We were able to show him the practical and real-world impact of our accreditation program, which certifies TCF businesses, ensuring their compliance with relevant Australian workplace laws and, in doing so, preventing and protecting workers from exploitation."

Professor Obokata also used the report to call for more Government investment in organisations such as ECA to prevent modern slavery from taking place, the need to shift beyond modern slavery reporting obligations to due diligence obligations and the need to strengthen and adequately resource the Office of the Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

"Australia has taken the important step of appointing an Australian Anti-Slavery Commissioner, and we look forward to the release of his first strategic plan," Reilly said.

"This is a critical area for investment if we want to see genuine change both here in Australia and globally that prevents modern slavery taking place."

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“Governments and consumers want to purchase from businesses that are doing the right thing from an ethical perspective, but without proper due diligence practices from an accreditation body such as Ethical Clothing Australia, blue washing - where companies falsely claim ethical standards - can start seeping in.”

“We need to see businesses evolving from reviewing and understanding risks to proactively preventing exploitation from happening in the first place.”

ENDS

Interview opportunities:

Rachel Reilly, Ethical Clothing Australia National Manager

Jenny Kruschel, Textile, Clothing and Footwear Union

Ethical Clothing Australia is a not-for-profit accreditation body that independently accredits local TCF businesses. This is done to uphold and protect the rights of local textile, clothing and footwear workers by ensuring they are being paid appropriately, receiving all their legal entitlements and working in safe conditions.

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