



PSA 

Women's
Network

**WORTH
100%**
Same value. Same pay.

Submission of the PSA Women's Network on MBIE's consultation on Modern Slavery and Worker Exploitation

Tēnā koutou katoa,

This document is a formal submission from the PSA Women's Network on MBIE's consultation on modern slavery and how we, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, can play our part in eliminating this abhorrent practice.

About the PSA Women's Network

The PSA is Aotearoa/New Zealand's largest union, with a membership of over 81,000, the majority of whom are female. In addition, our union is ethnically diverse, with members from a wide range of different backgrounds and cultures, including Māori, Pasifika, Asian and many others.

The mission statement for the PSA's women's network is as follows:

By women, of women, for women – our commitment is to identify and promote industrial, economic, political and social issues of concern to PSA women members and advance these issues within the PSA and externally.

This submission

Our network is wholly committed to advancing the rights and freedoms not only of PSA women members, but of all women, both within Aotearoa/New Zealand and globally.



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Our network is highly aware that more than 70% of the world's most poor are women and children. As such, it is women and children who are most vulnerable to exploitation, be that within the workplace, through enforced marriage, sexual exploitation or child labour.

As women living in a democratic country, enjoying the rights and freedoms denied to so many women globally who are vulnerable to both physical and financial exploitation through enforced slavery, the PSA Women's Network feel morally bound to use our collective voice in defence of those who have no voice. No one should benefit from slavery, yet even here, in Aotearoa/New Zealand families are estimated to spend \$34 a week on products tainted with slavery. This 'hidden crime' of modern slavery and worker exploitation in Aotearoa is currently estimated to affect several thousand people, but by its very nature of being hidden, the figure is quite probably higher. This is unacceptable; as a nation, we must help to eliminate slavery, in all its forms.

We strongly encourage the strengthening of laws within this country and the establishment of legal and business processes that will ensure all those living and working in Aotearoa/New Zealand are meeting their human rights obligations in regard to the elimination of modern slavery and worker exploitation. To actively play our part in addressing this issue can only enhance Aotearoa/New Zealand's reputation as a fair and ethical country, one that holds itself to high standards in everything we do, and which is a world leader in the defence of human rights globally. It is our role as women, wāhine/mafine toa of Aotearoa, to use our collective voice to support and raise awareness and take a stance against practices of deprivation and uphold human rights for all.

The PSA Women's Network is cognizant that Aotearoa/New Zealand has a growing migrant worker population and that, again, a high proportion of these workers are female. Many of these wāhine are particularly vulnerable to being exploited by their employers, and are too afraid to speak out.



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Our network believes unions can play an effective role in helping to ensure these vulnerable workers are supported in their efforts to overcome exploitative workplace practices. If we are serious about wanting to eliminate modern slavery, then we must start here, in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Employers who actively engage with unions and work collaboratively with them to establish safe and ethical workplaces will only be enhancing their reputations, giving their customers a high level of confidence that their products are ethically sourced and produced – something that is becoming increasingly sought after as our concern for our planet, and all life that depends on her, grows exponentially.

The plight of any woman or child in a modern slavery and worker exploitation situation will not and should never be deemed as their “destiny”. Women do not know, what they do not know. Investment in education is key and of paramount importance. Tripartite support also is required to provide assurances and hope. It is crucial that knowledge is made available to all, especially women in vulnerable and compromising positions. Increased consciousness and critical questioning will empower women to recognise, identify and take steps to help and support, or seek help for themselves and other women and children. Creating legislation to mitigate and eliminate modern slavery and worker exploitation, including revisiting amnesty for long term ‘overstayers’, will assist in giving all women and children the opportunity to live a harmonious, peaceful and prosperous life and to feel protected and safe.

Sadly, the exploitation of women is a human rights violation that has been present throughout the course of history and is still alive and well, even today. Given there are members on our committee who have had a direct, personal experience of such exploitation, or who know other women who have been/are victims of financial/sexual exploitation, these unethical practices are of deep concern to us.



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We acknowledge the primary objective of your proposal is to (quote):

'reduce modern slavery and worker exploitation in New Zealand and elsewhere, helping to build practices based on fairness and respect'

The PSA Women's Network respectfully suggest that while reducing modern slavery and worker exploitation is a very worthwhile goal, it should be a first step towards the further and higher goal of banning, deterring and ultimately eliminating modern slavery and worker exploitation completely.

In closing, we quote one of this country's most inspiring wahine, Kate Sheppard, who was part of a collective struggle to win women the vote, which was a catalyst for advancing the rights of women, both within Aotearoa/New Zealand and globally:

"All that separates, whether of race, class, creed or sex, is inhuman, and must be overcome."

Modern slavery denies millions worldwide their inherent right to live freely, and in equality. We must add it to Kate Sheppard's list of "all that separates" and do everything within our power to eliminate it.

Waiho i te toipoto,
Kaua i te toiroa

(Let us keep close together, not wide apart)

For administration purposes or further information about this submission please contact:

Margaret Takoko

PSA Women's Network Organiser

Email: Margaret.takoko@PSA.org.nz

Tel: 027 430 0382