

Strengthening Australia's Legislation for Modern Slavery Offences

The term 'sexual services' in the context of child trafficking must be removed to better reflect international best practice.

Destiny Rescue's CEO, Paul Mergard commends the Federal Government for its ongoing efforts to strengthen the legislation relating to modern slavery offences. A strong criminal justice response is critical in combatting and disrupting the growing issue of modern slavery, and aligning offence definitions with international best practice is a positive step.

Destiny Rescue welcomes both the opportunity for consultation¹ as well as the summation of findings recently released by the Attorney-General's Department in the *Targeted Review of Modern Slavery Offences in Divisions 270 and 271 of the Criminal Code Act 1995 (Cth) - Findings Report*².

Destiny Rescue commends *Finding 6*, which acknowledges the growing and significant role technology now plays within a modern slavery context (both locally and abroad). A recent study by Thorn concluded that 75% of sex trafficking victims are advertised online³, this is consistent with cases encountered by Destiny Rescue.

We also endorse *Finding 13*. This highlights the benefit in reframing trafficking in persons offences, so they do not require movement of a person to establish an offence. Destiny Rescue's Global OSEC Director commented "*Human Trafficking is a borderless crime and it is essential to have International alignment to deter traffickers and protect the vulnerable in both source and destination countries.*"

In particular, Destiny Rescue welcomes and supports the Department's *Finding 11*. Mr Mergard stated:

"We at Destiny Rescue strongly believe that the term 'sexual services' in the context of child trafficking offences is inappropriate. As an international organisation rescuing children every day from the horrors of exploitation, we wholeheartedly support the Department's finding that this term could be replaced or removed in its entirety to better reflect international good practice.⁴ It is our view that children who are subjected to sexual exploitation while being trafficked are victims of a criminal offence and are not providing services.

¹ <https://consultations.ag.gov.au/crime/modern-slavery-offences/>.

²

https://consultations.ag.gov.au/crime/modern-slavery-offences/user_uploads/findings-report-targeted-review-of-modern-slavery-offences.pdf

³ <https://taskforceonht.org/statements/stopping-online-child-sexual-exploitation/>

⁴ Page 74;

https://consultations.ag.gov.au/crime/modern-slavery-offences/user_uploads/findings-report-targeted-review-of-modern-slavery-offences.pdf

Destiny Rescue will continue to consult with the Federal Government on matters in relation to child sexual exploitation and modern slavery, both locally and abroad.

Paul Mergard, CEO, Destiny Rescue can be contacted for interviews and further information.

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Contact us for interviews and case studies.

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