

16/12/2024

Dr Joe McGirr
Chair Joint Modern Slavery Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
Sydney, NSW, 2000

Via: modern.slavery@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Dear Chair,

I write in response to your letter D24/058776 requesting advice on how the Committee can appropriately engage with children and young people in the inquiry process for the *Statutory Review of the Modern Slavery Act 2018*.

Firstly, I want to commend the Committee for having taken the decision to engage with children and young people in this process. As you have identified modern slavery is an issue that affects children and young people directly through instances of forced marriage and unfair workplace arrangements but also indirectly through supply chain challenges.

As your inquiries and stakeholders would have discussed this can be an extremely sensitive topic to discuss for survivors of modern slavery. This is compounded for children and young people who also experience vulnerabilities by virtue of their age and maturity. When engaging with children and young people it is critical that these realities are taken into consideration.

My office has previously supported the Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education Inquiry into children and young people with disability in New South Wales educational settings. I would encourage the Committee to discuss this with the Secretariat of that Committee about what worked well and what could be improved from that experience.

In this Inquiry, we utilised many of the techniques that you have raised in your letter.

Given the sensitivity of this subject, when I refer to young people, I would suggest the Committee engage with those over the age of 16 and ensure consent has been obtained from both the young person and their guardian.

I also encourage the Committee to ensure all members receive advice and/or training in trauma informed approaches to working with and understanding victim/survivors' responses when retelling what their story and giving evidence about their experiences.

In person evidence

Should the Committee decide to hold hearings with young people, I would encourage them to use 'in camera' with a minimal number of Committee and Secretariat staff with the young person. Given the sensitivity of the topic, I would recommend the Committee offer young people the opportunity to participate in individual hearings or small group discussions as different young people will be comfortable in different settings. These should be facilitated by a professional who has demonstrated knowledge and experience working with people who have experienced modern slavery and vulnerable young people. I would support the Committee's decision to not have Hansard or broadcasting available for the session and any notes taken should be provided to the young person to review. At the conclusion of these hearings, it is critical to ensure that the child or young person also has access to therapeutic support. I would be happy to provide you with a recommendation as to the service we used

for our Special Inquiry and Youth Advisory Council. Additionally, the young person should be empowered to have a support person present during the interactions should they wish.

Written evidence

With respect to written evidence, I support the Committee in their intention to remove any identifying markers from firsthand or third-party submissions that refers to a child or young person. If a child or young person has provided a submission, it should be at their discretion to redact their details. This is a matter the Committee Secretariat should canvas with the individual when they offer the opportunity to appear before the Inquiry. I would also encourage the Committee to accept written testimony from young people that may not take the form of a formal submission, this could be through audio-visual or another mean. One of the avenues we have previously used with Committee's has been the development of a short survey that can be sent out to service providers to support young people to participate.

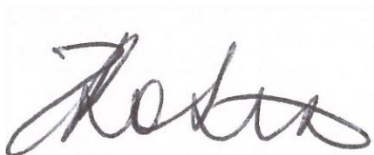
I am confident the Committee would have a number of service providers that can support you in finding young people that may wish to engage. I would recommend the following services:

- Anti-Slavery Australia
- Support for Trafficked People Program (STPP)
- Taldumande Services
- Muslim Women Australia
- Australian Muslim women's centre for human rights
- Freedom Hub
- Life without Barriers recently received funding from the Federal Government.

Finally, I highlight the importance of young people being given feedback about what happened as a result of their participation. I recommend the Committee consider how the outcomes of the inquiry can be shared directly with the young people who participate in a youth friendly and trauma informed way.

I thank the Committee for the opportunity to advise on this important work and wish you well as you seek to engage with young people on these matters. If my office can provide any further or ongoing support, please do not hesitate to reach out to my Office.

Yours sincerely,



Zoë Robinson

Advocate for Children and Young People

Office of the Advocate for Children and Young People