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**MEDIA RELEASE. Perth.**

**Path is clear for Australia to appoint an Independent Anti-Slavery Commssioner:**

**Andrew Forrest AO.**

Walk Free Foundation founder, Mr Andrew Forrest AO, today welcomed the final report by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade inquiry into establishing a Modern Slavery Act in Australia, a major step towards stamping out modern slavery in Australia and protecting the most vulnerable and marginalised in Australian society.

Mr Forrest heralded the report as a comprehensive blueprint for the Government and a significant step in the fight against modern slavery.

“The final report provides a strong basis for the passage of an Australian Modern Slavery Act that reflects world’s best practice in both supply chain transparency by business and a domestic response to modern slavery in Australia led by an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner.”

Mr Forrest said this teport cements Australia’s strong international leadership in the global movement against modern slavery, a cause the Walk Free Foundation is proud to have championed and put on the national and international agenda.

“Australia, through the Bali Process Government and Business Forum, now has the chance to lead by example and convince other nations to legislate their own “Modern Slavery Acts,” sai Mr Forrest.

The Global Estimates of Modern Slavery, produced by Walk Free and the International Labour Organization in partnership with the International Organization for Migration (both U.N. agencies), estimated that there were 40.3 million people in the world subject to conditions of modern slavery. This includes an estimated 25 million in forced labour, and 15 million people, predominantly women and girls in forced marriage.

The often-invisible victims of modern slavery endure horrific conditions, and the products of their exploitation are found in the supply chains of Australian and international companies that supply the food that we eat, the clothes that we wear and the consumer goods we use. The Business Council of Australia has also welcomed the prospect of new laws to ensure that modern slavery is eradicated from Australian supply chains.

Mr Forrest congratulated the committee for its excellent work and thanked all sides of politics for their bipartisan support for anti-slavery legislation. While the Government has formally committed to pass legislation, ensuring that Australian companies dig into their supply chains to root out modern slavery and offer transparency to consumers and customers, it is clear from the report, that a far broader response is required to wipe out all forms of modern slavery.

Among the committee report’s recommendations for inclusions into a Modern Slavery Act are greater regulation of labour hire companies, measures to tackle orphanage tourism, the creation of the office of an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, and modern slavery reporting by Government on its own supply chains.

Walk Free whole heartedly supports these recommendations. ENDS

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