

MODERN SLAVERY

Statement by Minister for Industrial Relations

MR W.J. JOHNSTON (Cannington — Minister for Industrial Relations) [9.02 am]: I rise to inform the house of a significant development in the McGowan government's support for local and global efforts to end modern slavery. On 18 February 2022, I formally advised the commonwealth that Western Australia supports Australia in ratifying the International Labour Organization's Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention. WA's support for ratification comes after the passage of the Industrial Relations Legislation Amendment Bill 2021 late last year, which delivered on a 2021 election commitment to progress industrial relations reform. The ILO protocol is a significant international instrument aimed at eliminating modern slavery and other types of forced labour. Australia's ratification of the ILO protocol will contribute to the global fight against modern slavery, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

An assessment of law and practice in Western Australia in 2017 highlighted that WA law did not comply with the ILO protocol, mainly due to the exclusion of certain types of workers from coverage under state employment laws. Historically, these exclusions have meant that some workers, including employees engaged in domestic service in a private home, have not been entitled to the minimum wage and other basic employment conditions. This issue was also raised within the *Ministerial review of the state industrial relations system: Final report* undertaken by Senior Counsel Mark Ritter and the member for Forrestfield. The review recommended removing the exclusions from the definition of "employee" in state employment laws. When the new state employment laws commence in the coming months, protections for vulnerable workers will be enhanced and WA law will comply with the requirements of the ILO protocol. It is unfortunate that the opposition did not support the new laws earlier as they would have passed in 2020.

The McGowan government is strongly supportive of local and global efforts to fight against modern slavery in all its forms. I am very pleased to confirm WA's support for Australia's ratification of this important international protocol.