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ANTI-SLAVERY AS SMART PUBLIC POLICY

REMARKS AT NSW PARLIAMENT HOUSE, 10 NOVEMBER 2022

(As delivered.)

INTRODUCTION

I started in this role on the first of August this year.

On many days since, at the end of another busy work day in Parramatta, I've got off the train at Milson's Point and walked down the hill, through a small park – perhaps some of you know it? – along leafy Kurraba Road, to a flat in Neutral Bay, on Cammeraygal country.

It's a fabulous commute. I feel blessed to live in this place, and to come home to it from a role that is so unique and full of promise.

There's the stunning harbour.

The happy dogs out with their owners for an evening stroll, if it isn't raining.

And recently, the sweet smell of jasmine on the cool night air.

But every time, at the same point on my path, there's a sudden moment of surprise, perhaps even dismay. My happy commute interrupted.

Because every time, as I rise over a crest on Kurraba Road, I have to cross another road, a road that winds its own way up from Sydney Harbour to the heights above on Military Road.

Ben Boyd Road.

THE LEGACY OF BEN BOYD

Now Ben Boyd was a “great New South Welshman.”

Ben Boyd was a Member of the Legislative Council, in the Parliament that sits in this building in which we've gathered this morning.

Ben Boyd was at one point one of the largest graziers in New South Wales.

There's a small plaque commemorating him at the corner of Ben Boyd Road and Kurraba Road. It reads "Benjamin Boyd. Banker, Merchant, Pastoralist and Whaler. A Resident in this Locality 1842 to 1849".

What it doesn't read is: "Ben Boyd - Slaver."

Yet that's exactly what he was.

The son of a Scottish slave-trader, Ben Boyd brought slavery to New South Wales.

He arranged the kidnapping and trafficking of 192 Pacific Islanders to New South Wales, for their forced labour, pioneering the practice that Nathan Moran referred to in his *Welcome to Country*, the practice that we euphemistically call 'blackbirding'.

Now, to its credit, the Parliament of New South Wales challenged Ben Boyd, holding debates and even enacting legislative changes to try to disrupt this practice.

Yet in those parliamentary debates, Ben Boyd justified his actions by reference to African slavery, even though slavery was by then illegal in the British Empire.

He wasn't censured. He wasn't held to account, not in this place, not in a Crown court.

In fact, he died in the Solomon Islands, literally trying to establish a South Pacific Empire.

And within a generation, both Ben Boyd and blackbirding were celebrated.

Ben Boyd Road was named around 1880.

And between 1863 and 1904, over 62,000 people were trafficked to northern NSW and southern Queensland for their labour, according to reports from the Australian Human Rights Commission and the NSW Parks and Wildlife Service.¹

Their stolen labour and agency became an important driver of wealth creation in the area, including around Bundjalung country up in the Northern Rivers where I live when I'm not in Sydney.

A hundred years later, in 1971, a National Park here in New South Wales, south of Eden, was named in celebration of him.

In celebration of a slaver.

Now, happily, that changed a month ago. Ben Boyd National Park was renamed Beowa National Park – meaning orca, or killer whale, in Thaua language.ⁱⁱ

I applaud First Nations leaders, and I applaud those in Government, who made that happen.

It's a sign that we're at a turning point.

A turning point in how we understand modern slavery.

A sign that we're coming to recognise that modern slavery is not just a threat to those it victimises. It leaves us all worse off.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Now, this isn't happening by accident. It has taken the commitment and leadership of many people, many of you in this room, over many years.

I applaud the leadership of the NSW Parliament, and many of you who have showed that leadership over many years, to bring the Modern Slavery Act 2018 (NSW) not just through the legislature, but onto the statute books, and into life.

I acknowledge the Hon. Paul Green, who is here – great to have you with us, Paul – and who was so critical to the introduction of the bill that became the Act, and the Reverend Fred Nile from his party.

I acknowledge John McCarthy KC, International Justice Mission – I know we have Steve Baird and his team here – Carolyn and Fuzz Kitto at Be Slavery Free who I saw here as well, Jenny Stanger, Heather Moore and many others whose advocacy over many years ensured we have strong cross-party support and a robust bill.

I'd like to acknowledge the Hon. Don Harwin who famously #gotitdon last year when the Act came back to Parliament for revivification.

I'd like to acknowledge and thank the Attorney General, Mark Speakman, who has laid the groundwork for me to start the process of delivering on the promise of the Act, and Secretary Michael Tidball, Paul McKnight and Mark Follet, and all the staff at the Department of Communities and Justice – several of them who have come out very early this morning to support this event – for their significant support.

I also acknowledge Professor Jennifer Burn, who served so ably as Interim Anti-slavery Commissioner several years ago, and whose leadership over decades has helped get us to this point.

I'd like to acknowledge Greg Donnelly, Aileen Macdonald, Hugh McDermott, Michael Daley, Adam Searle, David Shoebridge, Jenny Leong, Helen Dalton and the many other Members who have supported putting New South Wales at the forefront of efforts to combat modern slavery.

And I acknowledge also, and particularly, the survivors of modern slavery who are with us here today, some of whom have begun sharing their expertise with me.

Survivors are in the best position to know what works to end modern slavery.

I applaud your courage and resilience and I look forward to continuing to work with you and learn from you.

Finally, I acknowledge the Gadigal people of the Eora nation, on whose traditional country we are today. I acknowledge their elders past, present and future, and any First Nations peoples here with us today. Thank you to Nathan Moran for that really eloquent and poignant Welcome to Country this morning.

As an appointee of the Crown, I acknowledge that Gadigal and other First Nations peoples live today with the legacies of practices that we now call modern slavery.

In many cases, First Nations communities have survived modern slavery.

Forced labour and servitude, not only in domestic work but also in droving and in agricultural work.

Sexual enslavement by settler colonists across several generations.

State-sponsored child trafficking and child labour, a Stolen Generation.

Even wage theft of the First Nations ANZACs.

Colonial dispossession and dislocation of First Nations peoples from their country across New South Wales created the structural conditions that made them vulnerable to practices we now call modern slavery.

So, to acknowledge elders past, present and future is to celebrate First Nations' survival of those practices, over many generations.

Now I want to acknowledge these hard truths for several reasons.

Not because it's my place to tell those stories.

It's for others, notably First Nations peoples themselves, to do so, if, when and how they wish – just as it's for other survivors of modern slavery to own their own stories.

No, I acknowledge these hard truths because slavery is illegal, at all times and in all places, and to pretend otherwise is to put our own credibility at risk.

If we are to address modern slavery wherever we find it in global supply-chains, as the Act requires me to encourage us to do – whether that is in the cobalt mines of Congo or the cotton apparel factories of Xinjiang – then we have to be ready to name it when we see it and its legacies here in New South Wales.

Whether that's in agriculture or sex work or cleaning services or forced marriage – or in the way First Nations peoples have been treated.

We must be prepared to acknowledge not only the direct impacts of modern slavery on victims and survivors, but also the secondary impacts, the secondary harms it causes to families and communities, and even – the research tells us – down through subsequent generations.

I acknowledge these hard truths because doing so will help all of us understand how the way we organise our society and our economy can create the conditions that underpin modern slavery and the harms that it wreaks.

It is the system in which we live that creates the opportunities for criminals to exploit vulnerability.

MODERN SLAVERY AS A SYSTEM FAILURE

Friends, if there is one message I want you to take from me today it is this: Modern slavery is a system failure – so fighting it requires system-wide effort.

Now, when I say “system failure”, what I mean is that the system fails to serve all people as it should, whether the system is working as the people who control the system intend it to, or not.

And we can understand “system failure” in two ways.

The first is to understand the “system” in legal and institutional terms.

Under international law, states owe those under their protection a duty to protect their right to be free from slavery.ⁱⁱⁱ

So when modern slavery occurs, that is manifestly a system failure – a failure to protect that right.

But modern slavery is also a system failure in another, more practical sense. A failure of prevention in the social and economic systems we inhabit.

What unites the various offences that we group together under the umbrella concept of modern slavery – forced labour, forced marriage, debt bondage, organ trafficking, certain forms of child exploitation – is the common factor that they all involve one person exercising the powers of ownership over another.^{iv} They all involve the theft of a person’s social or economic agency.^v

Now that rarely if ever happens in a single step.

It happens in increments and over time, through grooming, or through slowly rising coercion, bullying and harassment in the

workplace, through gradual reduction of mobility and economic agency, through psychological and financial manipulation.

And along the way, people at risk of modern slavery are likely to encounter the state and service providers many times – the healthcare system, the family and child protection system, maybe the immigration and migrant resource system, the criminal justice system, the fair work system, the banking system.

So if someone is reduced to the tragic circumstance which we call modern slavery, it means those systems have failed to recognise a person at risk and to act preventively.

They've failed to intervene before vulnerability becomes victimisation.

ANTI-SLAVERY – NOT JUST THE RIGHT THING TO DO

So modern slavery is both a failure of this system of prevention, and a failure to protect people's human rights.

But the proposition I want to put to you today, as the Attorney General has helpfully flagged, is not simply that anti-slavery is the right thing to do, that it's an entitlement owed to people.

Indeed, it is all that. It is right. It is a human right.

And I believe that whatever your political philosophy, you should be for anti-slavery.

If you stand for the liberties of humankind, you're anti-slavery, just as Adam Smith was.^{vi}

If you're for the dignity of labour, you're anti-slavery, just as Karl Marx was.^{vii}

If you believe in free market competition, then you're anti-slavery – because tolerance of slavery in supply-chains gives some firms an unfair cost advantage over others.^{viii}

But equally, if you believe in regulating the market, for example to protect the environment, you're anti-slavery – because firms that treat workers' bodies as a resource to be plundered at will are more likely to take the same approach to the natural environment.^{ix}

So however you frame it, whatever your political philosophy, it's right to be anti-slavery.

But that's simply not the case I came here to make to you today.

I'm not here to explain the intrinsic value of anti-slavery but to persuade you of its instrumental value.

I'm here to persuade you that you shouldn't be anti-slavery because it's in somebody else's interest. I'm here to explain that you should be anti-slavery because it's in your interest.

Now, let's face it: much of the coverage we see of modern slavery issues is emotive and hyperbolic.

It stokes moral outrage.

It seeks to tug at our heartstrings, to turn our shame into action.

If you google human trafficking or modern slavery, and click on the images tab, you'll be confronted by a sea of black and white and red, hands bound, pictures of unidentifiable women and children often with their heads bowed in shame, perhaps even branded with a bar code.

Now, there's a place for emotion in our politics – and in policy-making – if we're careful that it doesn't spill over into stigmatisation and moral panic.

But the truth is, in today's political and media environment, relying on outrage actually has limited persuasive effect.

We're so saturated in hyperbole and polarisation that we can become numb to these kinds of messages.

The result is an escalating spiral of drama and darkness and despair, as people compete to be heard over the noise.

I don't believe that's the way to win and retain people's support for systemic change, over the medium to long term.

It doesn't offer hope for meaningful change or create the foundations of empathy that truly underpin long-term community mobilisation.

And worse, it risks rehearsing the exploitation of victims, reducing them from fully-portrayed fellow people to stereotypes of an exotic 'other'.

"Asian women trafficked like cattle", is just one recent example in the press.

In this narrative, survivors and victims aren't treated as people with voices of their own – they're treated as mere tropes, resources to be exploited for a good story.

So that emotive approach is also not the one I'm here to advocate for today.

No, the proposition I want to put to you today is a deliberately dispassionate one.

It's one that speaks the cold, calculating language of public policy. It's a lot for 9 o'clock in the morning, I know!

I want to talk to you about today about why anti-slavery is the rational, utility-maximising strategy that voters, and consumers, and directors, and investors, should adopt.

Why anti-slavery isn't something you should do out of altruism but out of cold, hard self-interest.

I'm going to draw on research and evidence from around the world and make this case to you in 3 parts.

First, I'll explain why I think modern slavery leaves us all worse off.

Second, I will explain why this means that anti-slavery will leave us all better off.

Third, I'm going to suggest that NSW, thanks to the Modern Slavery Act, is actually in the box seat to make the most of the opportunity this represents – to become a centre of excellence in the global fight against modern slavery – and I'm going to ask all of you to help make that happen.

MODERN SLAVERY LEAVES US ALL WORSE OFF

So let's start from this idea of modern slavery as a system failure.

Like climate change, there's growing evidence that modern slavery is an unintended negative externality, as the economists call it.^x

Just as we now recognise that we need to find ways to better price climate impacts into our economic and social systems, so we need to find ways to better reflect the true costs of modern slavery in our business and social relations.

We actually know more about these costs than many people realise.

Rigorous research points to 10 different ways that modern slavery negatively impacts economic growth and sustainable development.

What is common across these 10 is this idea of the theft of victims' agency – which turns out to be a really valuable resource.

Slavery is a massive robbery, transferring wealth from victims, their families, communities and even descendants, to exploiters in the here and now.^{xi}

That agency theft creates real harms – these negative externalities – that ripple out through society and the economy, snowballing into measurable macro effects that leave everyone worse off.

The evidence for everything I'm about to say is going to be available in the citations of this speech – for which we will publish a transcript on my website soon.

SLAVERY REDUCES PRODUCTIVITY

So first, the first of these 10 ways: slavery reduces productivity.^{xii}

Coercion in the workplace unsurprisingly demotivates workers, encouraging them to leave. Now if they can't leave, productivity drops.

So employers can use coercion to set wages below the value of what they call the marginal product of labour, and they pocket whatever labour cost savings result.

But that creates a negative externality: an inefficient allocation of labour at the economy-wide level.

Now the way that this works is that capital actually moves to the sectors where it can profit most by using coercion to extract these rents.

But that produces what they call a “depressed equilibrium wage”, so that all workers – not just slaves – are worse off.

In English, what that means, is that workers have to work for less or lose out to forced labour.

People who are themselves enslaved become, as researchers Monti Datta and Kevin Bales have put it, the “unwilling agents of economic stagnation”.^{xiii}

SLAVERY BREEDS POVERTY

So that’s the first point. Now second, slavery breeds poverty.

Renowned economist Daron Acemoglu found in one study that the historic presence of forced labour in a community increases contemporary poverty rates by a whopping 13.1 per cent.^{xiv}

Slavery harms the physical and mental health of its victims, it deprives them of educational opportunities, human capital formation, and leaves victims with burdens that depress their earning potential for the rest of their lives.^{xv}

We know that it increases gender discrimination and family violence in the communities where it’s present. It negatively impacts health outcomes and it lowers household income. And research shows these impacts endure through subsequent generations.^{xvi}

How much of that Gap that First Nations face today, the persistent Gap we seek to Close, may in fact be a result of the use of slavery-like practices in the past?

I think this bears reflection, because it may offer us new understanding, both of the drivers underlying challenges First Nations peoples face in this state today, and, perhaps, new ideas for policy interventions to address these challenges.

SLAVERY INSTITUTIONALISES INEQUALITY

The third way that slavery impedes growth and development is that it helps entrench that inequality.

It's an extractive system.^{xvii} It steals some people's agency, monetises it, and turns that into wealth.^{xviii}

And the people who gather that wealth use it to entrench the system that allows them to profit in this way.

They privatise the profits of the system and socialise the costs.

So it shouldn't be surprising that the research shows that slavery and trafficking are more likely in places where vertical inequality is high^{xix} and political freedoms are constrained or eroding.^{xx}

Now that transfer of wealth is still happening, on a massive scale. And again, it's measurable.

We know, for example, that over 6 billion dollars is transferred every year by migrant workers paying so-called "recruitment fees" to employers in order to have a job. Those fees frequently leave migrant workers in debt bondage. This represents a massive wealth transfer from poor exploited workers to rich employers.^{xxi}

If those sums were left in the hands of workers and their communities, they would make a significant contribution to addressing inequality, and to development, which we know would actually leave us all better off economically.

SLAVERY WEAKENS MULTIPLIERS

The negative impacts of these wealth transfers point to a fourth way that slavery undermines economic growth: it weakens what economists call multiplier effects.

Slaves simply can't spend what they aren't paid.

And even where they are paid, modern slavery often involves employers forcing their victims to spend their money in certain ways – on company supplied equipment, or uniforms, or transport, or fees that are imposed on them.

That prevents victims making their own choices about how to spend and invest that money – on their own healthcare, education or their own business, or their family.

And as a result, that reduces the contribution these people make to economic multipliers.

Again, we can measure this.^{xxii} IMF researchers found that if you end child marriage – just one element of modern slavery – there is an immediate 1.05 per cent bump to national GDP.^{xxiii} Just child marriage.

Imagine the bump to GDP we could get if we ended all forms of modern slavery.

SLAVERY DISCOURAGES INNOVATION AND MAKES INDUSTRY VULNERABLE TO COMPETITION

Now of course, people who are enslaved have little opportunity or motivation to innovate. And it turns out neither do their employers because innovation may actually reduce their income from rents.

That reduction of innovation is the fifth way that slavery leaves us all worse off.

Studies show that sectors that rely on forced labour grow fat and complacent.^{xxiv}

That leaves them vulnerable to competition, if they're exposed to it.^{xxv}

So they fight hard not to be exposed to it, and that leaves us all worse off.

They can charge uncompetitive prices and leave us vulnerable to supply disruptions if there's an exogenous shock – such as, I don't know, a pandemic. It's deeply anti-competitive behaviour and it's clear that it leaves us all worse off.

SLAVERY DISTORTS CAPITAL MARKETS

That points to a sixth way in which slavery leaves us all worse off: its distorting impact on capital markets.

It can lead to faulty valuations of businesses that rely on illegal labour practices deep in supply chains.

If the board of a company doesn't identify and properly manage that risk, it leaves the business and shareholders heavily exposed when that risk finally gets priced in – maybe because of a media story or because of regulatory action.

And in certain cases, we've seen that impact cascade along a company's value-chain. It can even affect the financial viability of whole sectors.

And in some historical cases, it's even led to country-wide recessions.^{xxvi}

All stemming back to the unrecognised, unpriced presence of forced labour.

SLAVERY HITS THE PUBLIC PURSE

So the impacts of repricing can be severe not only for private interests but also for public interests. But slavery also hits the public financial position more directly – through the public purse.

On the state revenue side of the ledger, slavery reduces income tax receipts because wages are unpaid. And it reduces consumption tax receipts because you can't spend what you aren't paid.^{xxvii}

The sums involved again are really quite significant: in 2009, the International Labour Organization calculated underpaid wages connected to forced labour at around USD 21 billion each year, globally.^{xxviii}

On the expenditure side, slavery increases public expenses, on enforcement, criminal justice, health services and victim services, perhaps even compensation costs.

The UK Home Office found that costs of 3.3 to 4.3 billion pounds sterling hit the UK public purse in this way.^{xxix}

Translating that to New South Wales, allowing for differences in the size of our estimated victim population and exchange rates, it works out that somewhere between 350 million and 3.5 billion Australian

dollars in direct costs result from modern slavery – direct costs to the public purse.^{xxx}

That's pretty profound, if you think about it: if we ended slavery, we could save perhaps \$350 million or several multiples of that.

SLAVERY WEAKENS GOVERNANCE

But the costs are not purely economic. They also impact governance.

The research shows that the presence of forced labour and human trafficking correlates to increased social stratification and inter-group violence, and increased hostility and mistrust, and that is transmitted, again, down generations.^{xxx}

SLAVERY BREEDS CORRUPTION

And we're not done yet.

Last week, 60 Minutes, The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age ran a series of quite troubling stories identifying connections between organised crime, human trafficking and money laundering in this state and nationally.^{xxx}

Now this shouldn't be a surprise.

Modern slavery impacts economic growth and development through those connections to corruption and illicit financial flows.

Trafficking and slavery are illegal, so bribery and corruption are critical tools of the trade.

British professor of management studies Andrew Crane calls this "domain maintenance", the business cost that traffickers have to bear to pay for a protected domain in which they can do things that are actually illegal, in order to profit.^{xxx}

And one of those things they need to do is launder the profits of slavery.

So large-scale trafficking and slavery can put really serious pressure on the integrity of institutions that handle large volumes of cash, whether that's pubs and clubs, casinos or banks.^{xxx}

And that can create risk for the company and indeed for financial institutions as a whole.

It's only 2 years since Westpac agreed to pay a 1.3-billion-dollar penalty to settle legal action brought by AUSTRAC, relating to payments for child sexual exploitation undertaken through its payment systems.^{xxxv}

SLAVERY HARMS THE ENVIRONMENT

So that's the ninth way. And finally, the tenth way – that I know you've all been waiting for! – there's now a large body of evidence showing that slavery even harms the environment.

It skews production to unsustainable labour-intensive methods, and frequently coincides with illegal deforestation, illegal fishing and illegal land use.

That in turn reduces space for carbon sequestration, increases carbon emissions, and it leads to loss of biodiversity and natural capital stock.^{xxxvi}

THE ANTI-SLAVERY OPPORTUNITY

So what we should take from all this, friends, is that modern slavery leaves us all of us – all of us – immensely worse off.

But equally, that of course means that anti-slavery can actually make us all better off.

Investing in anti-slavery may not only reduce slavery but increase productivity, reduce poverty, reduce inequality, improve governance, improve the fiscal position, protect capital markets, reduce corruption and even help the environment.

So for all these reasons, anti-slavery isn't just the right thing to do, it's smart public policy.

This is an unashamedly utilitarian approach to anti-slavery.

It's not one that excludes, or precludes, an argument from rights or from a moral position.

It simply adds another layer, arguing for anti-slavery as an act of collective self-interest.

So what does that look like in practice?

Well, centrally, I would argue, it means adopting a systems perspective.

If modern slavery is a system failure, we need to adjust the whole system to embed and promote anti-slavery outcomes.

It can't just be about grafting onto an existing system new capabilities or services, such as an Anti-slavery Commissioner, or a hotline.

It can't just be about tinkering with the existing systems for detecting, investigating and prosecuting modern slavery offences, or for identifying and assisting victims.

It can't just be about tinkering with our reporting on modern slavery risks in our supply-chains, but not taking effective action to address those risks.

Instead, we need to make the whole system work to prevent modern slavery, rather than unwittingly enable it.

So for that, we need to get all our existing systemic capabilities – both inside and outside government – working towards shared anti-slavery goals.

We need a healthcare system that can identify victims of trafficking who may present, without announcing themselves as such, in emergency rooms or sexual health clinics or community health centres, and then safely refer them to the trauma-informed care that they need and deserve.

We need community legal centres, migrant resource centres and legal-aid systems that can identify girls at risk of forced marriage, or temporary migrant workers at risk of forced labour, and take the steps needed to prevent vulnerability becoming victimisation.

We need a criminal justice system that can effectively hold perpetrators to account and provide those harmed with effective remedy – without the price of justice being the re-traumatisation of

victims, loss of immigration or employment status, or worse, direct retaliation against them and their families, here or overseas.

We do need a public procurement system that can identify goods and services made with modern slavery, but also one that has the capability to address those risks effectively, through active engagement and providing and enabling remedy.

And we need a broader private sector that doesn't just see modern slavery reporting as a costly compliance exercise, but rather recognises investment in anti-slavery as a value-creation opportunity, reflecting that in their balance sheets, in their stewardship decisions and in their investment strategy.

So how do we get there?

DEVELOPING A CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

New South Wales can't solve modern slavery on its own.

There are significant aspects of the problem and response that stretch across borders– key issues in the system are obviously decided in Canberra, not here in Macquarie Street.

So we will need to ensure that what we do here in NSW meshes carefully with what's going on in Canberra, and elsewhere in other Australian jurisdictions.

And the Commonwealth *National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery* provides a really critical overarching framework to ensure that alignment.^{xxxvii}

But there is also still a huge opportunity for leadership and innovation here in NSW.

The *Modern Slavery Act*, I would argue, puts us in the box seat.

It creates a framework for collective action to tackle modern slavery, for information sharing and even for collective learning.

The Act requires me, for example, as Anti-slavery Commissioner, to consult with the NSW Procurement Board and the Auditor-General, who I believe is with us today – thank you for your time – to consider

the effectiveness of due diligence by various government buyers to remove products of modern slavery from NSW procurement.

Two weeks ago, the Procurement Leadership Group endorsed a 9-month programme of work that I have proposed, which will see my Office collaborate with NSW government entities to develop a shared implementation framework, ensuring NSW government agencies are equipped to take reasonable steps to remove products of modern slavery from their procurement.

And I am really pleased to share that KPMG Australia, who are with us here today, will be supporting my Office's work on this shared implementation framework, over the next 8 months.

But my powers aren't limited to public procurement. The Act also empowers me to make recommendations to certain government entities about significant issues in their operations.

So in that context, I have initiated a dialogue with NSW Health to explore how my Office can support their efforts to strengthen screening, diagnostic, medical and public health arrangements, so that our world class public-health system more effectively supports our shared anti-slavery goals.

Interestingly, the Act also empowers me to issue codes of practice for identifying and addressing modern slavery risks in supply-chains.

I have entered discussions with more than one industry to explore the possibility of collaboration on such codes of practice.

And tomorrow, my Office will host a workshop with leading business and investment industry actors to explore how they, too, can promote our shared anti-slavery goals.

NSW is the 7th largest economy in Asia.

So the changes we make in this part of our system – public procurement, industry practice and capital market arrangements – it will have a really significant impact on market behaviour across the region.

The Act and all of these changes position NSW at the leading edge of incorporating modern slavery risk into responsible investing and sustainable finance, both through public and private sector action.

And it gives us the opportunity to figure out and scale up what is working, so that we have a clearer picture of who is at risk, how we can identify, reach and assist them, and how we can make all these systems work for people.

So it has put us on a path to becoming a global centre of excellence in the fight against modern slavery.

To achieve that, we need a strategic approach.

And again, thanks to the work and wisdom of so many in this room, the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW) sets us up for just that.

The Act requires me to develop, as soon as reasonably practicable – another tongue-twister at 9:30 in the morning – a strategic plan.

And I'm really pleased that we're working with the James Martin Institute for Public Policy – I see Dr Vafa Ghazavi at the back there and his team – a non-partisan thinktank founded by the NSW government in collaboration with the University of Sydney, UTS and Western Sydney University.

We have begun a series of expert consultations.

And all of you, too, can Have Your Say. Please do go to the NSW governments Have Your Say website. You will see a section on fighting modern slavery and you can contribute your views on how we should fight modern slavery in the years ahead, by filling out a survey or offering us a story. And you can do that in an anonymised and de-identified form. All of the details on privacy are there on the site.

THREE THINGS WE NEED FOR SUCCESS

It's going to be a long process of listening and learning, and developing collaborative projects to strengthen the anti-slavery system in NSW.

And to achieve success, I think we need three things. And it's those three things that I want to leave you with today.

First, I think we need to put survivors at the heart of this process. Modern slavery is all about taking away people's agency.

So if we design and deliver projects we call “anti-slavery” without putting those who have experienced, or who have used these services at the centre of that process, we are simply replicating that denial of agency.

Instead, our anti-slavery processes themselves should be designed to empower survivors.

Now I am not a survivor of modern slavery – though three generations of women from whom I am descended in the UK were.

Is it too much to hope for, that whoever succeeds me in this role might have direct, lived experience of modern slavery?

If that seems outlandish or unlikely – and I suspect it will to some in this room, who will say that victims and survivors are too traumatised, too vulnerable, too fragile, too damaged to take on the burden of such a leadership role – then I would ask: what do we need to do, in the coming years, to change that?

How can we empower survivors to give them the opportunity to not just to be heard but to lead here in NSW? If survivors can lead the Global Fund to End Modern Slavery, as they do, why can't they lead here, too?

Second, I think we have to be clear, that all of this is going to require resources. Any process of system reform or change will. If you want to develop the reforms through legitimate process, to implement them effectively, and to assure their effectiveness over time, it takes resources.

Now at present, my Office is funded from the budget of the Department of Communities and Justice, and I really welcome this support.

In time, given the benefits to the NSW budget, and to our economy and society as a whole that will flow from our anti-slavery work, I hope governments and indeed the NSW Parliament will support a dedicated funding line for this work in the state budget papers, and support resourcing procurement, audit and training functions across government.

If we're going to change the system, we have to resource that change.

I hope they will provide the resources needed to make good on the promise of the *Modern Slavery Act*, making NSW a true global centre of excellence in the fight against modern slavery.

Third, and perhaps the most critical resource we need.

It's you. You are actually the critical resource in this.

We are all part of the system that needs to change, so we all need to be part of that change.

To do that, we need to recognise not only the need for the system to change but the opportunities for change, when they cross our path.

So that leaves me where I started my journey, today – on my path home after work, at the corner of Ben Boyd and Kurraba Roads.

Where my happy commute is too often interrupted.

You see, what leaves me puzzled is not that there is a road in Sydney named after a slaver.

Attitudes have changed over time.

What leaves me puzzled is that we have the opportunity to change that, and we don't take it. We now do recognise the harms of celebrating a slaver, and yet we don't take that opportunity.

You see, last year, a petition was presented to North Sydney Council to rename Ben Boyd Road.

Several interesting alternative names were proposed, including Barangaroo Road, named after the Cammeraygal woman who lived in the area, the very neutral 'Neutral Bay Road', or the more normative 'Reconciliation Road'.

Being a democratic body, the Council decided to deal with the problem by conducting a survey.

When 55 per cent of the roughly 2000 respondents to the survey voted against changing the name, the Council decided not to act, claiming in a Resolution that it would entail an undue "practical and financial burden".^{xxxviii}

So what was that burden? The Council did their homework. They had estimated the main part of it was the cost of signage changes – which was a whopping \$6,200.^{xxxix}

Last year the Council's income was over \$40 million – over 6,000 times the cost of that change.^{xl}

So that's where my surprise, my dismay, comes from.

The Resolution makes no mention of the practical and financial burden on the people Ben Boyd enslaved, or on their descendants.

It makes no mention of the burden imposed on other enslaved and trafficked peoples and their communities who encounter this contemporary celebration of slavery and risk being retraumatised.

The Resolution doesn't even reference the financial burden that slavery imposes – has imposed – on North Sydney residents.

And yet, as I've explained, we know it does.

I think what's going on here, and it's quite common for all of us, is that we have set up a false dichotomy – between costly action, and cost-free business as usual.

Our inaction is fundamentally a product of cold calculating self-interest, assessing that anti-slavery is actually more costly than turning a blind eye to slavery.

But what I have put to you today is that this is just not the case.

In fact, the costs of inaction significantly outweigh the costs of action.

Put another way, anti-slavery is a sound investment.

I want to leave you with one astounding figure:

For every dollar spent on preventing child sexual exploitation, for example, just one part of modern slavery, there's estimated to be a \$16.75 return.^{xli}

One dollar to \$16.75.

So what I ask of you, when you leave today, is simply to act on this realisation:

Anti-slavery is in my own interest.

System change to prevent modern slavery depends on all of us understanding that simple point and acting accordingly – changing

what we do so that it promotes anti-slavery, rather than unwittingly enabling slavery.

That is how we are going to end modern slavery in NSW – by changing the system. And the truth is, you ARE the system.

So – over to you.

Thank you.

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