

MEDIA RELEASE

Vinnies says no to goods produced using forced labour

9 February 2021

The National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia calls on all members of the Federal Parliament to support a private member's bill introduced by Senator Rex Patrick, which seeks to ban the import of goods produced by Uyghur forced labour.

In a submission to the to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee, National Council President, Claire Victory strongly encouraged the Federal Parliament to take an emphatic stand against the well documented human rights abuse of hundreds of thousands of Uyghur people in Xinjiang Province and elsewhere in China.

'The Society provides all forms of help that alleviates suffering or deprivation and promotes human dignity and personal integrity in all their dimensions,' Ms Victory said.

'It is from this context that the Society and its members call on the Australian Parliament to support this Bill, in line with Australia's ratification of the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and related international conventions against slavery and forced labour.

'In March 2020, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute reported that Uyghurs are working in factories that are in the supply chain of more than 80 well-known global brands in the technology, clothing and automotive sectors.

'Turning a blind eye and remaining silent on the repressive surveillance, mass arbitrary detention, torture and mistreatment and forced labour imposed on the Uyghurs and other Muslims is not an option.

'Australia must join Canada, the United Kingdom and other countries in banning goods produced by Uyghur forced labour,' Ms Victory said.

The Committee is due to report by 12 May 2021.

A copy of the National Council's Submission to the Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee regarding the *Customs Amendment (Banning Goods Produced By Uyghur Forced Labour)* Bill 2020 is available [here](#).

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 60,000 members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 groups located in local communities across the country.

Media contact: Judith Tokley 0408 824 306, Media phone: 0475 068 209 / media@svdp.org.au