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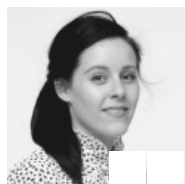
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# Minister accused of killing supply chain abuse findings



Justice Minister Michael Keenan is yet to respond to a report on slavery from a working group he set up. Fairfax



by Primrose Riordan

Justice Minister Michael Keenan has been accused of "death by committee" after he failed to respond to a report of a working group he set up recommending laws to stop exploitation in company supply chains.

The group has now released its own report fearing its recommendations will be ignored.

Exploitation scandals have hit major Australian brands over the past year. In February, Rip Curl was forced to apologise after its clothing labelled "made in China" was found to be made in North Korean factories. The company blamed a subcontractor.

In 2014 Mr Keenan set up a "supply chains working group", which met eight times in three cities and reported to the government in December 2015.

"The group is a long time in the making. We spent an entire year getting together, people donated their time, a lot of people flew all around Australia on their own cost to contribute to this," said member and University of Technology researcher Martijn Boersma.

With the government yet to respond to the recommendations, two of the 20 authors of the report – Brynn O'Brien and Mr Boersma – have released their own report to push the recommendations.

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"We've just had a year of many examples of supply chain abuse that involve Australian companies. For them not to have acted, it gives the impression the whole recommendation to have a supply chain working group, it's almost like death by committee," Mr Boersma said.

[The new report](#), released by Catalyst and The Australia Institute, calls for laws to force companies to mandatory disclose the steps taken to identify adverse human rights impacts in their supply chain and for government to strengthen its own procurement processes to find abuses.

"In the style of the Obama administration's executive order, the Australian government should update its procurement and tender policies to require significant suppliers and contractors to undertake measures to ensure that the goods and services the government purchases are free of human trafficking and slavery," the report says.

Last year Britain passed supply chain transparency legislation – the Modern Slavery Act – that requires companies to disclose their efforts to identify slavery and human trafficking in their supply chains.

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