

## **Eight Australian businesses sign up to tackle forced labour and exploitation**

Ben Doherty Thursday 10 December 2015

Eight big Australian retailers and businesses have pledged to work together to reduce, and ultimately eliminate, forced labour, human trafficking and slavery from their manufacturing process and supply chains. Woolworths, Coles, Big W, Masters, Simplot Australia, Goodman Fielder, Inghams Enterprises and Officeworks signed up on Thursday to the Pledge against Forced Labour, developed by the Retail and Supplier Roundtable sustainability council.

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“This pledge unites us against slavery and forced labour,” O’Brien said. “It aims to bring together retailers, suppliers, the government, NGOs and the Australian community, to act and eliminate this issue.

“We now call on other major Australian businesses to join us by signing up to the pledge.”

The head of group corporate responsibility for Woolworths, Armineh Mardirossian, said the pledge was an important first act in “shifting the dial”. “This is the first step in what will be an ongoing process,” she said. “Companies understand they can’t address this on their own, so we are keen to work cooperatively: business and civil society and government working together. “These supply chain issues are complex, and there are many different variables.

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The perils of exploitative supply chains were brought to international prominence in 2013, when Rana Plaza, an illegally-built garment factory in Dhaka, Bangladesh, collapsed, killing 1,127 workers. Just hours before the eight-storey building came down, the factory owner had used armed security guards to force the workers back in after they had fled when large cracks appeared in the building.

250 words

Pledge = promise

Garments = clothes