

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Human Trafficking and Child Labour

Mr ROBERT (Fadden) (4.00 p.m.)—There is a scourge in our world called people trafficking and about 26 million people are caught in its snare today—80 per cent are women and girls and 50 per cent are children. What is of concern is that child labour and the trafficking of children are even used in the production of cocoa in Africa, noting that 70 per cent of the world's chocolate is produced using cocoa beans farmed in West African nations. Over 280,000 children are involved in some of the worst forms of child labour on cocoa farms in West Africa. In both Ivory Coast and in Ghana children are routinely forced to work long hours with machetes and pesticides to help harvest cocoa beans. Some of these children are taken or enticed from their homes; others come voluntarily to cocoa farms only to find themselves enslaved in a living hell. Of these 280,000 children, over 152,000 work in pesticide application—142,000 in Ivory Coast alone—and 146,000 children, under the age of 15, clear plantations using machetes.

These figures from IITA 2002 have likely been underestimated. It is difficult to identify specific farms using child and forced labour as there are almost two million cocoa farms in West Africa, most of them small family owned operations. Yet it is estimated that 21,000 of the 625,000 children under 18 working on cocoa farms in Ivory Coast are not related to the farmers or farm workers and that at least 12,000 have been trafficked. What is clearly needed is reform of the cocoa trade. One of the easiest ways for this to be achieved is for the chocolate industry, via the Confectionery Manufacturers of Australasia, to do what is right and ensure its supply chains are free of child labour and human trafficking. In doing so the Australian industry will become leaders in the field of eradicating exploited labour from cocoa supply chains.

The chocolate industry made a commitment in 2001 to address this issue, but deadlines for action have repeatedly been missed. The global chocolate industry is worth some \$71 billion, yet collectively it has spent only \$40 million on solutions to end exploited labour. Australian consumers today have no more assurance than they did eight years ago that exploitation of child labour is not a component on the manufacture of the chocolate we consume every day. The Don't Trade Lives campaign, for which a number of activists are behind me, is calling for the Australian chocolate industry, via CMA, to develop and publicly outline a time-bound and costed plan of action that will ensure its products are free from child labour and human trafficking. The Australian chocolate industry must take the lead in eradicating exploited labour from cocoa supply chains. It must push for global action across companies and governments to ensure that these supply chains do not involve child labour.