

# **Maurice Blackburn Statement on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking**

**For the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021**

# Reporting Entity

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This Statement is made on behalf of Maurice Blackburn Pty Limited (ABN 21 105 657 949), the reporting entity under the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (Cth) (**Act**), and makes this statement pursuant to section 13. It includes voluntary statements from the following entities as they operate under the same corporate policies and values as Maurice Blackburn:

- Zabulon Pty Ltd (ABN 50 005 114 670)
- Claims Funding Australia Pty Ltd (ACN 158 551 967)
- Zabulon Holdings Pty Ltd (ABN 128 858 113)
- Maurice Blackburn SA Pty Ltd (ABN 641 011 216)

This statement covers the reporting period of 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

Maurice Blackburn Pty Limited is an incorporated legal practice and its shareholders control a sister corporation, Zabulon Pty Ltd (ABN 50 005 114 670) (**Zabulon**). While Maurice Blackburn Pty Limited employs legal professionals, Zabulon is the entity that employs the administrative and support staff that facilitates Maurice Blackburn's essential business functions.

For the purpose of this statement, 'Maurice Blackburn', 'we' and 'our' collectively refers to Maurice Blackburn Pty Limited (ABN 21 105 657 949) and Zabulon.

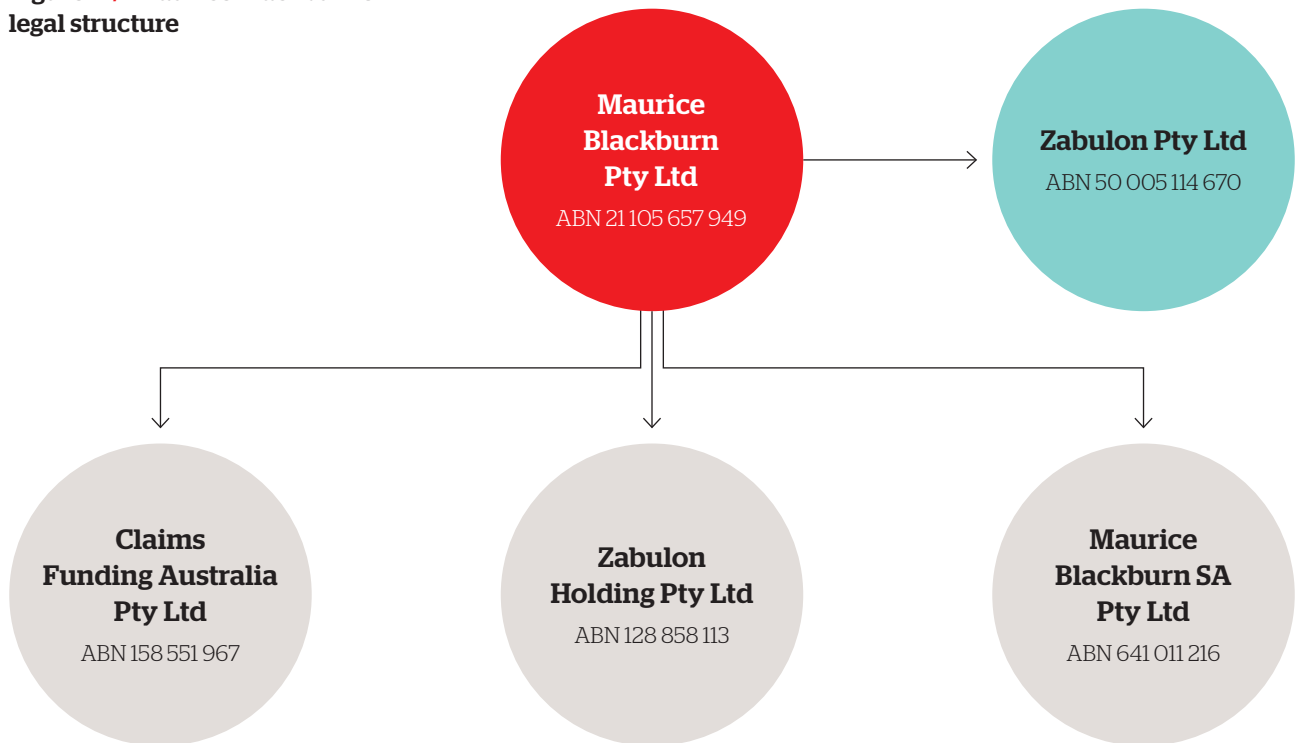


# Structure, Operations, Supply Chain

## Structure and Operations

Our structure is as follows:

**Figure 1 / Maurice Blackburn's legal structure**



Maurice Blackburn is a national firm with over 30 offices throughout Australia and more than 1,100 of the country's best and most respected legal professionals. We provide accurate and confidential advice without unnecessary legal jargon, and we recognise the varying financial circumstances of our clients and offer a flexible fee policy. We treat every client who walks through our door with the sincerity and respect they deserve.

We provide a range of professional legal services including:

- Personal injury law
- Class actions

- Superannuation and insurance law
- Financial services disputes
- Wills and estates
- Employment law, and
- Social Justice Law.

Our offices located in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory.



Maurice Blackburn owns three subsidiaries:

Subsidiary		Office location
<b>Claims Funding Australia</b> (ABN 158 551 967)	Litigation funding company	Australia
<b>Zabulon Holding Pty Ltd</b> (ABN 128 858 113)	A holding company established to hold shares for Claims Funding International	Australia
<b>Maurice Blackburn SA Pty Ltd</b> (ABN 641 011 216)	Entity established for trust purposes	South Australia

## Supply Chain

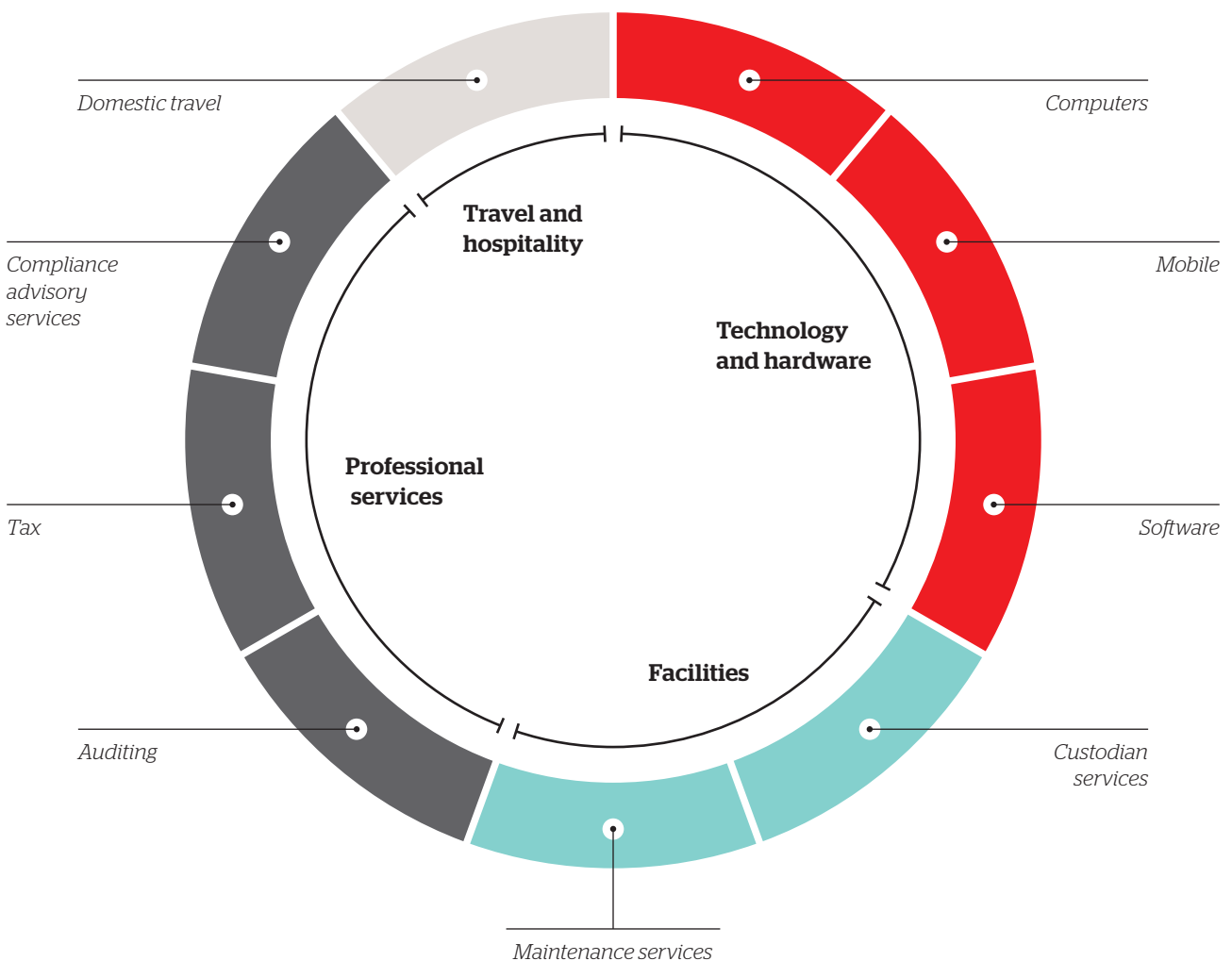
For our third-party engagement, the firm values trusted partnerships and prioritises maintaining long term relationships with suppliers that are fair and honest in their conduct. While procurement activities are conducted by either Maurice Blackburn or Zabulon, they are generally managed by Maurice Blackburn's Finance department.

At Maurice Blackburn, we engage professional services companies to provide essential business services, such as marketing, insurance, tax advisory and audits. We also procure the necessary services of specialist legal experts, such as barristers, on behalf of our clients.

Zabulon is responsible for maintaining supplier contracts in relation to lease agreements, IT equipment, custodian and maintenance services.

Our vendors are predominately located in Australia with some in the Netherlands, United States, and United Kingdom. The main types of goods and services we procure include:

- **technology and hardware** - computers, mobile, and software purchases;
- **facilities** - custodian and maintenance services for Maurice Blackburn locations;
- **professional services** - auditing, tax, and compliance advisory services; and
- **travel and hospitality** - domestic travel to connect with clients or other legal professionals.



# Modern Slavery Risk Identification

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Like most professional service firms, the primary and most complex entry point for modern slavery comes from our supply chain. We are aware that no industry is immune to modern slavery and there is inherent risk in the goods and services procured by our direct suppliers. We engaged an external expert to interview staff across Facilities, Finance, and Marketing to identify potential higher risk supplier relationships including, but not limited to:



## Commercial cleaning services

Including any cleaning, restoration, and general building maintenance that has been contracted by Maurice Blackburn or our building manager. This sector traditionally has higher reports of underpayment and employees using higher rates of subcontracting to avoid paying entitlements and hence is a key focus for our firm in seeking to minimise this risk<sup>1</sup>.



## ICT purchases and offshore software development

Like many professional services firms, to maintain our online platform and online promotions we engage third party professionals to supply hardware and software as a service or one-off product. In a global market, these goods and services can be conducted overseas and within geographies that may not have the same level of labour protections afforded in the Australian workforce, and hence is another key area for vigilance.



## Branded merchandise

Maurice Blackburn may at times procure branded merchandise, including apparel, kitchenware, or novelty goods. It is likely that a number of these items or their components are produced overseas, where the risk of modern slavery is greater at assembly and/or manufacturing stages.

# Modern Slavery Risk Management

## Employment

We rely on a diverse pool of talented professionals to provide legal services to clients and operate vital business functions. We have an affirmation statement, About Maurice Blackburn, which speaks to our values including to “treat others fairly and with respect”. This translates into our ‘all in commitment’ on anti-discrimination and inclusion reflected in our:

New Starter and Induction Policy

Grievance Procedures Policy

Change of Employment Conditions Policy

Contractor Management Policy

We have implemented and continuously improve our payroll management systems and reporting mechanisms available in-house and through external partners. We believe that these policies, in conjunction with legal profession regulation that exists in the Australian states we operate in, does limit the risk of our workforce being subjected to modern slavery, but we are committed to continuing to take a proactive approach to these issues to ensure this remains the case. In our practice there is a possibility we would represent survivors of modern slavery, but this is outside the scope of the Act.

## Governance

Our modern slavery initiatives have had the commitment of our senior leaders, Audit and Risk Committee and the Maurice Blackburn Board. Maurice Blackburn established a modern slavery Working Group, comprised of key staff, that will play a central role in the governance, implementation and monitoring of our modern slavery response.

## Operations Assessment and Strategic Plan

During the reporting period we engaged an external expert to conduct an operations risk assessment. The purpose of the assessment was to assess our current approach to human rights and modern slavery and provide recommendations on areas for improvement. The recommendations assisted the development of Maurice Blackburn’s modern slavery strategic plan. The plan will ensure activities, timelines and accountabilities are well articulated across the organisation so that we continue to address modern slavery risks. The Working Group will continue to meet and drive the delivery of the plan.

1 INCLEAN MAGAZINE, *The industry that’s cleaning up modern slavery*. Published 23/10/2019 at <https://www.incleanmag.com.au/the-industry-thats-cleaning-up-modern-slavery/>



## Policies

As part of the operations risk assessment our existing policies and procedures were reviewed against the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs). Going forward we will apply the relevant recommendations to our policy documents.

Maurice Blackburn maintains two reporting mechanisms for employees to raise grievances and concerns:

Whistleblower Policy	Grievance Procedure Policy
Intended for internal and external reporting at Maurice Blackburn to submit reports of potentially criminal or unethical behaviour	Internal reporting at Maurice Blackburn to raise issues of management and personal grievances
The Policy is publicly accessible <a href="#">here</a>	Policy is available to staff on the intranet
Eligible whistle-blowers are encouraged to report concerns without fear of retaliation	Employees are encouraged to file a grievance when informal resolution tools have been exhausted
People and Culture team will investigate the report and the issue and may determine if corrective action is required	People and Culture team will investigate the grievance and may determine if remediation is required
<b>Both policies are owned and operated by Maurice Blackburn's People &amp; Culture Team</b>	

Activities were undertaken during the period to raise awareness of these policies. We plan to continue raising further awareness of these policies in the next reporting period.

## Supplier Management

We have updated our standard supplier contractual terms to include a template Modern Slavery clause for all new supplier contracts. The template includes warranties that the supplier will comply with the Act and responsibly manage the risk of modern slavery within their own supply chain.

During the reporting period we commenced a supplier due diligence project to allow Maurice Blackburn to gain a deeper understanding of the activities our suppliers undertake to comply with modern slavery obligations, as well as assisting us to assess modern slavery risk in our own supply chain. As our modern slavery response matures, we will continue to take steps to assure our trust in vendors with practical due diligence stages and direct, honest engagement with our suppliers.

## Awareness and Education

Maurice Blackburn's executive team and Audit and Risk Committee have been presented with the requirements of the Act and the actions the firm plans to undertake to address modern slavery.

To improve awareness of modern slavery risks we engaged an external provider to deliver modern slavery training to key staff involved in the procurement activities of Maurice Blackburn.



# Assessing effectiveness

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We assess the effectiveness of our actions in several ways:

- tracking our actions and the outcomes of our actions under the strategic plan to demonstrate continuous improvement to our modern slavery response
- monitoring for any reported incidents of modern slavery within our organisation and supply chain
- undertaking reviews of our policies and procedures with regards to modern slavery
- aiming to increase awareness of our relevant policies and procedures on an ongoing basis, and
- the number of people who have completed modern slavery training.

In the upcoming reporting period, we will:

- continue with our supplier due diligence project
- continue to raise awareness of our Whistle-blower policy and relevant reporting lines
- update relevant policy documents to ensure they can respond to modern slavery, and
- develop a document that provides resources and guidance on responding to modern slavery reports within our organisation.

# Consultation

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During the reporting period Maurice Blackburn shared copies of its inaugural modern slavery statement and modern slavery strategy with the managing director of Claims Funding Australia, Europe, and International. Managing directors of subsidiaries will be contacted by the Maurice Blackburn modern slavery working group to report on any new initiatives or changes in approach regarding modern slavery risk management.

# Other


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At Maurice Blackburn, we believe our employees can be agents of positive impact and change on clients and the community. We believe that raising awareness and empowering people through knowledge creates small impacts in the workplace and our employees' personal lives which in turn can have a cascading effect across communities and Australia.

In addition to our legal services, Maurice Blackburn openly engages with the federal parliament, departments and agencies on labour rights, regulation and standards within Australia to provide legislatures with case studies and insights from front line workers.

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This statement has been approved by the Board of Maurice Blackburn on **6 December 2021**.



**Steve Bracks**  
Chair of the Board  
**Maurice Blackburn**

