

Fred Harrison  
Chief Executive Officer  
Ritchies Stores Pty Ltd  
PO Box 2051  
Seaford B.C.  
Seaford Vic 3198

To whom it may concern,

I have recently been horrified to learn that the chocolate I enjoy and purchase from your stores is made from cocoa grown using child exploitation and slavery.

*Approximately 70% of the cocoa beans used to make the world's chocolate comes from West Africa, mainly the Ivory Coast and Ghana. Child trafficking and exploitation is common in this region. It is estimated that in the Ivory Coast's cocoa industry alone, more than 100,000 children work under "the worst forms of child labour," and that about 10,000 are slaves. They receive little or no pay and there is no hope of ever going to school. Some media reports have claimed that in the worst cases children as young as six are being forced to work 80-100 hours a week, enduring beatings and malnutrition on top of back-breaking work.*

*As the Ivory Coast produces 43% of the world's cocoa, it is likely almost half the chocolate products sold in Australia could be linked to child slavery. In the last financial year, Victorian chocolate manufacturers alone imported 3 million kilograms of Ivory Coast cocoa paste.*

As a chocolate consumer and customer of your company I am utterly appalled at this situation. I will be taking personal action by purchasing more Fairtrade chocolate in the future. Fairtrade is ethically certified, supports local farmers in impoverished regions and invests in the development of their communities.

As one of the main retail outlets supplying chocolate products you have an imperative moral responsibility to address this issue; not only because it is the right thing to do but because your profits are implicitly linked with the abuse of human rights occurring within the chocolate industry. There are two readily achievable things you can do which will make a significant contribution to the global effort tackling this horrific problem, which are simple and easy to implement.

- 1) Stock more certified Fairtrade chocolate, and most crucially,
- 2) Prominently and explicitly promote the Fairtrade chocolate sold at your stores.

It is essential that the Fairtrade chocolate you stock is prominently displayed, labelled and explicitly advertised. This will help increase the market share of Fairtrade chocolate, thereby directly benefiting the lives of impoverished cocoa farmers and exploited children, providing encouragement for chocolate manufacturers to become more accountable and also increase

funding towards programs such as the International Cocoa Initiative and the IMPACT program, and incentive to manufacture more Fairtrade certified products themselves.

Recent surveys conducted by Stop The Traffik have shown that many people would like to buy Fairtrade chocolate if it was easier to find in stores. Will you do this by giving prime position on the shelves to such products and by explicitly promoting the Fairtrade chocolate that already exist within your stores? It is within your power to enact these simple measures, which would make such a substantial difference to the lives of so many desperately suffering children.

For more information you could contact Oxfam, World Vision, Stop The Traffik or The Australian Fair Trade Association which, among other prominent organisations and persons, are all campaigning to overcome this abhorrent situation.

I most strongly urge you to take the steps necessary to enact these two simple and effective measures. Conscience demands it.

Yours faithfully,