



ACRATH was acknowledged at the tabling of the report in Parliament in June 2013 :

'Mr LAURIE FERGUSON: ... I also want to take the unusual step of congratulating some people who drove this inquiry, most particularly the Australian Catholic Religious against Trafficking in Humans, a group of Catholic nuns who have run a very strong campaign on behalf of those people suffering from sexual slavery. That is an area where sometimes people tend to blame the victims as much as the perpetrators, so their work has really been central in getting this on the agenda.'

My week in parliament working with the wonderful people of ACRATH is best summed up with this quote by Margaret Mead:

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Felicity Heffernan

Advocacy Points

11 ACRATH advocates were in Canberra for advocacy from 17 to 21 November. They stayed at the former Brigidine convent.

Training and preparation was held on Sunday night.

In Parliament, teams of two or three formed for meetings.



ACRATH acknowledged the bipartisan support for policy work on human trafficking. We believe effective legislation has grown out of the genuine collaboration between government and civil society. The process has included frank dialogue as well as formal national round tables at which stakeholders have furthered policy work.

ACRATH began work in 2005. To support our funding request, we pointed out our highlights for 2013:

- Strong role in federal Parliamentary Human Rights Sub-Committee Inquiry.
- The ACRATH RAP – Radio Awareness Project.
- A web-based unit for senior secondary students has been developed by the ACRATH Education Group.
- Support for 36 trafficked people.
- Success at VOCAT – Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal - in Victoria.
- New groups: an ACRATH group in Port Pirie and a young women's group in Melbourne, as well as emerging interest in Darwin, Toowoomba and on the Gold Coast.
- ACRATH's effectiveness in working with other agencies in Australia, in the Asia Pacific region, and globally.

We raised the following points:

- ◇ ACRATH congratulated Parliament on the legislation, *Crimes Legislation Amendments (Slavery, Slavery-like Conditions and People Trafficking) Act 2013*. ACRATH asks that resources follow the passing of this legislation to ensure its efficacy. ACRATH advocated in particular for a federal compensation scheme for victims of human trafficking. We also shone a light on the rights of overseas workers in Australia.
- ◇ ACRATH asked the Australian Government to ensure our Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) reaches 0.5% of our Gross National Income (GNI) by 2015, and 0.7% by 2020.
- ◇ ACRATH asked the Australian government to ensure that the supply chain of goods brought into Australia is slave-free.

ACRATH met with:

- 11 members of the Senate
- 35 Members of the House of Representatives
- 2 Ministers: Kevin Andrews (Lib, Vic) and Scott Morrison (Lib, NSW)
- Advisers to Josh Frydenburg (Lib, Vic), Parliamentary Sec to Prime Minister; Julie Bishop (Lib, WA), Minister for Foreign Affairs; Minister Keenan (Lib, WA) Minister for Justice; Mark Dreyfus (ALP Vic), Shadow Attorney General; Christine Milne (AG, Tas), Leader of the Australian Greens
- Representatives from Care Australia, The Attorney General's Department, Australian Catholic Migrant & Refugee Office, Australian Federal Police, Australian Institute of Criminology, Department of Social Services, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the USA Embassy



Photos from left: work between meetings with MPs recording follow up ideas and preparations for upcoming interviews; sharing planning with first-time advocates with ACRATH; the group relaxed one night over curries to share stories and to plan our next day.

Outcomes from the Advocacy week

During our advocacy week we met many people as mentioned earlier. Some of those meetings were to introduce ourselves and our issues to MPs who were unfamiliar with human trafficking. In other meetings we put a case to people who have the power to make changes. We also spoke with MPs and advisors who have got to know us over the past 8 years of advocacy; many offered us advice about how we might be more effective. Some of our advocacy team located the 46 new MPs and hand delivered our briefing paper to each of them.

ACRATH, and a number of colleague NGOs, have long been concerned about visas and Social Security entitlements for people trafficked into Australia. In this advocacy week ACRATH met separately with Social Services Department officials, the Social Services Shadow Minister and the Social Services Minister. This run of meetings was followed up at the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking in Sydney which happened to be planned for the Friday of our advocacy week; at the Roundtable we were able to take our advocacy point a step further; a teleconference of key people is now being planned.



Noelene Simmons sm and Christine Carolan with Social Services Minister Kevin Andrews (Lib, Vic)

In Canberra we took the unusual step of advocating for funding for our own organisation. 23 MPs agreed to contact the Attorney General and the Minister for Justice in support of our funding request. Some of our team drafted a letter of support and got it back to those MPs before we left Canberra.

In the advocacy week we were able to involve in our team three new younger members: Mai, Felicity and Sarah. They each brought skills and new contacts into our team.

My first visit to Canberra as part of the ACRATH group has been an amazing experience. It is clear what a difference it makes to be personally present to meet with the members of parliament, Ministers and their advisors to develop the ongoing relationships and to walk the corridors and be a physical presence advocating for the rights of those who are trafficked and a reminder to those we see that Australia could be doing more to help stop people being treated as commodities.

(Sarah Puls sgs)



Sarah Puls sgs, Stephen Jones (ALP, NSW) and Lucy Van Kessel pbvm

In Canberra the team discussed the status of the recommendations from the Report of the Parliamentary Human Rights Sub-committee; ACRATH is now developing a plan to build on those very worthy recommendations.

By the end of the week, the team have compiled a 30 page follow-up document which records every meeting we had, any follow-ups we promised to undertake, and any links we can build on into the future. In planning this year's advocacy we used three follow-up documents we had compiled in the previous few years; these provided invaluable background resources for the team. Among the follow-ups are an invitation to attend a new MP's maiden speech in parliament and to work with an MP on a forum in regional NSW.

My very first visit with an MP with the wonderful Shane was to Senator Lee Rhiannon; it resulted in Senator Rhiannon raising ACRATH's financial concerns in the Senate Estimates Committee.

Felicity Heffernan



(L-R) Rowan Ramsay (Lib, SA), Anne Tormey rsm and Maree Marsh csb; Carole McDonald rsm and Anna Burke (ALP, Vic); Noelene Simmons sm, Clare Moore (ALP, Qld), Mai Mitsumori-Miller and Christine Carolan