



ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans) is one of four NGOs, recently refunded by the Justice Minister, Michael Keenan, to work against human trafficking in Australia.

In July 2014 Minister Keenan also announced ACRATH would receive a grant to develop a curriculum on forced marriage and facilitate teacher training in government and independent schools.

Successes of ACRATH's work from August 2011-June 2014 across five states and two territories included communication and awareness-raising through giving 388 presentations, distributing 439 newsletters and uploading 318 updates to our website. We also supported 54 trafficked people and recorded 21,516 hours of volunteer work by our members. We have estimated this as a donation to the project of over \$500,000.

### Advocacy Points

15 ACRATH advocates were in Canberra for advocacy from 22 to 25 September. They stayed at the former Brigidine convent and the Australian Catholic Bishops accommodation.

Training and preparation was held on Sunday night.

In Parliament, teams of three or four were formed for meetings.

**ACRATH acknowledged the bipartisan support** for policy work on human trafficking. The process has included frank dialogue as well as formal national round tables.

Key points of advocacy included:

- Changes in the support provided to people who have experienced trafficking through the de-linking of financial support (Support for Trafficked People Program) from the participation in criminal justice matters. A system based on the rights and needs of the victim would be preferable as the current linking discriminates against people who are unable to participate in the criminal justice system.
- Changes to the names of visas which are available to people who have experienced trafficking to eliminate the descriptors "criminal justice" and "trafficking" in favour of descriptors which do not contribute to discrimination or labelling of people trying to move on with their lives.
- Access to quality English classes for victims of trafficking at all stages of their journey
- Review of the schemes for provision of financial compensation/assistance to victims of human trafficking crimes.
- A request for action from the government on the issue of slavery in the supply chain of goods being imported into Australia, with particular emphasis on the need for the commencement of the working party of the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery convened to begin work in this area.



### During the four days ACRATH members met with 79 Members of Parliament and Advisors.

This included 48 Members of the House of Representatives and 17 Senators.

We were particularly delighted to meet with Minister Michaelia Cash who holds ministerial appointments as Minister *Assisting the Prime Minister for Women* and *Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection*.

Meetings outside Parliament House included:

- Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Paul Gallagher
- Attorney General's Department
- Australian Institute of Criminology
- Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee Office
- Catholic Social Services Australia
- Philippine Embassy
- The Salvation Army Freedom Project



Work between meetings with MPs recording follow up ideas and preparations for upcoming interviews; sharing planning with first-time advocates with ACRATH.

## Outcomes from the Advocacy week

- Agreement by many MPs to raise with the Justice Minister the need to commence the Slavery Free Supply Chain working group
- Overwhelming support to re-name discriminatory visa titles
- A commitment by a large number of ministerial advisors to address visa titles and special benefits for trafficked people
- Positive reception of the one page briefing paper on visa/entitlement issues as requested by ministerial advisors
- Recognition of our concern that new legislation will require trafficked people to wait six months before they can access Special Benefits
- Scheduling of a discussion re access to Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) on the agenda for the next National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery
- Affirmation of ACRATH's briefing paper; MPs appreciated the succinct points which helped discussion
- Improved follow-up documentation; we are going home with every interview typed up and collated, ready for follow-up action
- Strengthening ACRATH's ability to advocate for justice.

## From Hansard

**(Hansard is the name given to the edited transcripts of debates in the Senate, House of Representatives, Federation Chamber and parliamentary committees.)**

*"I also would like to bring to the attention of the Senate that I have been approached by the Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans, ACRATH. They have expressed some concerns about 'collateral damage' of people who are victims of slavery and human trafficking in our country who would be unintended victims of the measure that relates to the special benefit. If passed, individuals under 30 on the special benefit will become subject to a six-month exclusion period similar to that proposed for job seekers on Newstart. ACRATH have spoken with the government. We hope the government will be reconsidering this position as well. We understand there may be a compromise under consideration here where the six-month waiting period might be reduced to one month but in reality, there should be no waiting period for people in the extreme circumstances involved in human trafficking and for migrant victims of domestic violence."*

Senator Christopher Ketter – 22 September 2014



(L-R)

The Advocacy team inside Parliament House

Meeting with a Member of Parliament

## A reflection from ACRATH WA intern

*"Parliamentary advocacy at its best. Being part of the ACRATH advocacy team these past few days has given me an insight into how advocacy work is done at this level. It was very heartening to receive much positive receptiveness by Members of Parliament and their staff regarding the issues we raised. I was also deeply impressed in witnessing how each member bring with them their own set of experience and expertise to give voice to people affected by human trafficking. This experience has demonstrated to me how a small group of people can make a significant impact in the promotion of social justice. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn from and be of this group of remarkable people."*

Nicholas Jarvis Tan WA ACRATH

On Tuesday Genny Ryan attended the *Women, Peace and Security Civil Society Dialogue Conference*. It was an opportunity for ACRATH to join in the discussion and reflection on [UN Security Council Resolution 1325](#) and contribute towards monitoring the implementations and progress of the *Australian National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security*.