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Catholic Healthcare Look to Explore Human Trafficking

Many of Australia's largest Catholic health care providers will gather across three cities on Monday to hear how they can slavery-proof their supply chains and better treat people who have been trafficked.

St Vincent's Health Australia (SVHA) and ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans) joined forces last year in a groundbreaking project to change the way hospitals treat trafficked people and how to 'slavery proof' the goods and services they use.

The model will be explored on Monday (19 November 2018) with other healthcare providers who are keen to explore anti-trafficking possibilities. Some hospitals have already developed anti-trafficking policies and procedures. They will also discuss what they have achieved to date.

At least 10 major healthcare providers will participate in Monday's Human Trafficking Open Meeting at St Vincent's Health Australia in Melbourne. Some will participate via video link-up in Sydney and Brisbane.

ACRATH's Executive Officer Christine Carolan said the participants in the Open Meeting showed that Catholic healthcare providers were serious about justice issues and ensuring that prevention of human trafficking was a priority.

"We can be a mighty force for justice if we work together on this," Ms Carolan said.

Ms Carolan said the SVHA and ACRATH project has produced a model that is replicable.

The SVHA and ACRATH project, now in its second phase, is looking at how trafficked people – who may present at any of SVHA's healthcare facilities Australia-wide – can be identified and receive necessary treatment, support, referrals and access to services. This includes women who have been sexually exploited, people facing forced marriage and people who have experienced forced labour.

The project is also working to ensure that goods and services procured by St Vincent's Health Australia are slavery-free and that staff are aware of issues around human trafficking. St Vincent's Health Australia has identified 50 of its largest suppliers of goods and services and will explore supply chains.

"This Open Meeting will give us the chance to lead people through the process and show how it can be done," Ms Carolan said.

Speakers at the Open Meeting will explore:

- A case study
- The Modern Slavery Act
- Evidence base of the SVHA/ACRATH project
- Education of SVHA staff
- Development of procurement policies
- Identifying products where human trafficking is a risk

According to the *Trafficking in Persons – Australian Government Response 2015-2016 report*, the Australian Federal Police received 691 referrals relating to human trafficking and slavery-related offences between 2004 and 30 June 2016.

“International research has shown that 85% of trafficked people, who accessed a health care service, were not identified as having been trafficked,” said Lisa McDonald Group Mission Leader, St Vincent's Health Australia.

“This research is telling us that trafficked people are largely invisible in the health system. That will change.”

For more information contact

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