

ACRATH ANNUAL REPORT

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.”

(Article 1, Universal declaration of Human Rights, 1948)

2018 marked the 70th anniversary of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. It is ACRATH’s belief in the dignity of the person that calls us to work for the elimination of human trafficking and slavery. People are not meant to be treated as commodities and yet sadly some people are.

Each year holds its joys and its challenges. 2018 was not an exception. Events on the global and domestic scene challenged us and invited us to continually reflect on how we can be agents for change. While for some people Australia might seem a long way from conflict zones and the mass migration that is taking place towards European countries, we are not exempt from some of the effects of this unprecedented global movement. People in these African and Middle Eastern countries are looking for a better life. Similarly, people coming to Australia through the Seasonal Worker Programme and other means are also looking for a better life for themselves and their families and are oblivious to the traps that can sometimes lead to their exploitation. ACRATH’s strategic plan 2017-2020 states that we aim to achieve our goals by working for systemic change locally and globally. As part of the global family it is important for us to be conscious of what is happening globally so that we can act locally. So, what has been happening on the global scene?

Global Context

One cannot speak about the global context without mentioning Pope Frances. He continues to speak out about this topic and encourage both the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences and the Migrant and Refugee Section of the Vatican Dicastery on Integral Human Development to actively work towards the elimination of human trafficking and slavery. The Migrant and Refugee section recently released a document entitled Pastoral Orientations on Human Trafficking. This document provides a series of key considerations for pastoral ministry and advocacy. At the invitation of Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM Conv DD, then Chair of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, and now Chair of the Bishops Commission for Social Justice, ACRATH member, Sr Colleen Jackson rsc, travelled to Rome in July 2018 to take part in consultations that led to the publication of these Orientations.

UN Global Compacts

On 10th December 2018, International Human Rights Day, the Global Compact on Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration¹, was adopted by the majority of UN Member States at the Intergovernmental Conference on Migration in Marrakesh. Sadly, Australia was not one of those States. The Compact sets out 23 objectives for safe, orderly and regular migration. Objective 10 is a commitment to “prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international migration.” Many of the strategies listed under this objective were already embedded in ACRATH’s strategic plan.

¹ Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration accessed 3rd January 2019

(https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713_agreed_outcome_global_compact_for_migration.pdf)

Sustainable Development Goals

In 2018 Australia released its Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals². Three of the Goals have targets specific to human trafficking and slavery. While the Australian report mentions programmes designed to address human trafficking and slavery, it did not give any indication of progress that has been made with regard to this issue. It is ACRATH's hope that in the future Australia might increase its efforts to support anti-human trafficking activities in the Pacific. Many of our Pacific neighbours have not ratified the Palermo Protocol. One explanation for this could be lack of resources and so it is ACRATH's desire that through its Overseas Aid program Australia might support our Pacific neighbours in this regard.

International Connections

After discussion within the ACRATH National Committee and consultation with the members of ANZRATH (Aotearoa-New Zealand Religious Against Trafficking in Humans), ACRATH member Colleen Jackson was asked to take up the role of Talitha Kum Continent Coordinator for the Pacific. This role involves participation in regular video conferences with the Talitha Kum International Coordinator and other Continent coordinators. Talitha Kum (the International Network of Consecrated Life Against Trafficking in Persons) is celebrating its tenth anniversary this year. Networks are important on the local and global context informing action and giving a sense of solidarity.

Australia's Ambassador to the Holy See, Melissa Hitchman, is a good friend to ACRATH. When members of ACRATH are visiting Rome for various reasons Melissa is always willing to make time to connect. She has also brokered engagements for ACRATH with members of the Australian Government briefing them ahead of time about issues ACRATH is interested in discussing.

Australian Context

And now we turn to the situation in Australia. A major focus in 2018 was the passage of the Modern Slavery Act through the Commonwealth Parliament. Having participated in the Inquiry into whether Australia should have a Modern Slavery Act in 2017, ACRATH actively followed the progress of this legislation. A small group of ACRATH members were delighted to be in the Senate Gallery with other NGOs when the Bill passed the upper House. The Act requires entities based, or operating, in Australia, which have an annual consolidated revenue of more than \$100 million, to report annually on the risks of modern slavery in their operations and supply chains, and actions they are taking to address those risks. ACRATH was pleased to see that Government procurement is captured in this legislation. The Modern Slavery Act is a great step forward. However, the Act does have some limitations. A particular aspect that ACRATH advocated for was the appointment of an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner whose role would be to support business as a trusted advisor rather than a compliance monitor, encourage best practice in the prevention of slavery and human trafficking, and promote public awareness. ACRATH will continue to advocate for an Independent Commissioner as well as the licensing of labour hire firms to prevent the exploitation of migrant workers in Australia and for the establishment of a National

² Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals: 2018 accessed 3rd January 2019 (<https://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/development-issues/2030-agenda/Documents/sdg-voluntary-national-review.pdf>)

Compensation Scheme. Such a scheme would eliminate the inconsistencies currently in place across State and Territory schemes and enable compensation for the full harm experienced by trafficked persons.

Prior to the Commonwealth Legislation being passed, the NSW Parliament passed a Modern Slavery Act. This legislation has provision for an Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner, a lower reporting threshold for businesses, the use of penalties for non-compliance and for awareness raising and education in the community. It was with great joy that ACRATH received the news that our long-time colleague, Professor Jennifer Burn, Director of Anti-Slavery Australia, had been appointed as the NSW Interim Anti-Slavery Commissioner. We congratulate Jennifer and look forward to collaborating with her in her new role.

Ministerial Changes

Changes in leadership have become a feature of Commonwealth politics. Last August there was another leadership spill resulting in a new Prime Minister and new Ministerial appointments. In the week prior to the leadership spill ACRATH, during its annual advocacy visit to Federal Parliament, had participated in the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery and had very positive meetings with the Assistant Minister for Home Affairs and the Social Service Minister. It was now once again necessary to build relationship with new Ministers and ministerial staff.

Reflection Questions

1. Was there something in the prayer that stirred you?
2. Is there something that you are holding in your heart about the current local or global context?
3. Are there questions rising in you?

Comments from 2 or 3 people

ACRATH Strategic Plan

Currently ACRATH is midway through its 2017-2020 strategic plan. It is important that the work we do is grounded in facts. As a very much under-reported crime accurate statistics on human trafficking are not easily available in Australia. ACRATH is therefore pleased to be working in partnership with Flinders University to research the prevalence of this crime in South Australia. This project is being managed by ACRATH's South Australian members and will not only inform our work in South Australia but also throughout Australia. Sr Meredith Evans rsm, Regional Coordinator of South Australia, provides a report on the project:

While human trafficking is a documented reality in South Australia there have been no studies or investigations conducted into human trafficking. Very little is known about the types, conditions, extent and impact of human trafficking in South Australia.

Marinella Marmo, Associate Professor in Criminal Justice from Flinders University Law School has been researching human trafficking since 2005 as part of her research into areas of international criminal justice and transnational crime. In 2017, after meeting with government and non- government stakeholders, she proposed to fill the knowledge gap in relation to human trafficking in South Australia by an exploratory pilot study into what is known about the incidence of human trafficking in South Australia. The proposed study was to take a distinctive bottom-up approach

to mapping crime incidence, interviewing service providers rather than starting with the police and the criminal justice system.

Funding for such a project from Flinders University was conditional on collaboration with partnering organisations. While human trafficking agencies in SA were supportive of the project, they were unable for a variety of reasons to be a partnering organisation. ACRATH SA was willing. Approval by the National Committee of a funding contribution, and in-kind research assistance provided by one of our members, enabled ACRATH to qualify as a partnering organisation.

The project, *“A pilot study on human trafficking and modern forms of slavery in South Australia to generate knowledge and improve service delivery”* started in August 2018 and intended to conclude in July 2019, will enable knowledge building, knowledge sharing among participating stakeholders, knowledge transfer in case of staff turnover, and identification of gaps in knowledge and in service provision. The qualitative methodology of the research involves service provider contribution to the design of the interview protocol, in-depth interviews with 10 service providers in rural as well as metropolitan locations and analysis and communication of the results to participating service providers and the wider community.

ACRATH’s current Strategic Plan has five goals. It is not possible to list all activities so a snapshot will be provided.

Goal 1: Eliminate forms of human trafficking in Sexual exploitation and Forced Labour

Awareness raising is a key component of ACRATH’s work. People need knowledge in order to take action. ACRATH’s education resources are continually being reviewed to ensure they are up to date and relevant for audiences. A focus of awareness raising is empowering the audience to take action in response to what they have heard. Sr Claire Griffin csb, Coordinator of ACRATH in Victoria, gives an outline of some of ACRATH’s awareness raising activities:

In 2018, ACRATH members in Vic renewed their commitment to raising awareness about human trafficking and modern day slavery. We offered an increased number of sessions raising awareness about the various aspects of human trafficking always giving ideas about what action people can take to help eliminate human trafficking. Participants in these sessions included senior students in Catholic and other high schools, parishioners, teachers in Catholic schools, students at ACU and other tertiary colleges, community chaplains and seminarians and religious from overseas as well. We also responded to invitations to speak in a variety of community groups including Probus and Soroptomists. On occasions we worked with networks, for example, with students from six country schools at a Justice Camp in their rural diocese and, local faith communities at ecumenical gatherings and prayer days. Throughout the year we linked for educational and training sessions with other Catholic agencies such as Caritas, Catholic Social Services Victoria, Catholic Education Melbourne, St Vincent’s Health Australia, and the Victorian –Tasmanian Catholic Anti-Slavery Working Group.

Part of our work in 2018 included planning to improve our presentations. As a result of a simple review by all our members at a meeting towards the end of 2018, and

further planning by a small group, a few emerging goals in this area for 2019 have surfaced for us. These include: offering training or coaching for some new members to become presenters; having a working group of members to prepare a number of adaptable PowerPoint packages to cover different areas/issues of human trafficking for our target groups; being more aware of possible links with curriculum requirements for senior students and using these as leverage in our work in schools; sharing the tasks of this work amongst our members e.g. some members being responsible for co-ordinating our awareness raising activities, some doing presentations, some coaching, some being back-up people at presentations etc.

The Victorian ACRATH members are happy to share this awareness-raising work with members in other States.

ACRATH's awareness raising is often informed by the practical work we do. This is very much the case with regard to work against Forced Labour. Sr Janine Bliss fmm, Regional Coordinator for Queensland, who has led ACRATH's work around Forced Labour in Queensland reports:

Work on labour exploitation and trafficking in QLD is centred around the Bundaberg area. A highlight of this work for 2018 has been the development of the relationship with Australian South Sea Islanders Association (ASSI) and working with them on the Seasonal Worker Programme (SWP). One important outcome of this developing relationship was the inclusion of two ASSI members in our ACRATH advocacy week in Canberra. Their contribution regarding the existence of slaves and blackbirding were important aspects of our advocacy for improved working conditions for SWP participants.

ASSI provide two pastoral Care Workers to support and advocate for the rights of farm workers on the SWP program. A Pastoral care role description was developed by ACRATH and endorsed by ASSI. Regular visits and phone calls to Bundaberg play an important role in the ongoing relationship with ASSI and assists in identifying SWP workers' needs and in planning and coordinating actions. A major and consistent problem for workers is the need for proper induction. Clarity as to which Government department is responsible, and direct contacts for support are needed, with appropriate information then shared with SWP participants. Given that to date no workers have received an induction, other than the farmer providing information around pay slips, work sheets, and contracts, ACRATH worked to identify information which would be included in an induction, loaded it onto a tablet and passed this on to the two ASSI pastoral workers to be used when connecting with seasonal farm workers. The tablet has basic information including YouTube videos on the Seasonal Worker Programme in English and other South Sea Islander languages, work place safety information, including the importance of drinking water to avoid dehydration, and more recently the addition of English conversation.

During 2018 ACRATH member Peter O'Neill, a Columban priest from Victoria with over 25 years' experience working with migrant workers in Taiwan, participated in a visit to Bundaberg. During his visit Peter heard first hand of the 22 workers from Vanuatu who in 2014 were exploited, had their passports and visas taken from them, threatened with deportation if they complained, received little to no money, had very little food,

and lived in overcrowded conditions. The contractor Emmanuel Banni was charged and the case went to court. He lost his license, was ordered to pay the workers and was fined. However, the workers have not seen their wages. This case has become an important part of ACRATH's advocacy work with the case being raised during our Canberra Advocacy visit in August, at the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery, and then raised again with members of Parliament and relevant government departments during a visit to Canberra in December 2018. ACRATH is committed to ensuring that the Bani Case is not forgotten and that the Australian Government and the Fair Work Ombudsman do all they can under Australian laws to assist the 22 employees from Vanuatu to receive the wages an Australian judge said they were owed. This case is important for many reasons, including the need to have a national precedent, so other workers finding themselves in a similar situation may find hope that they can finally receive justice for the abuses they have endured.

Goal 2: Eliminate Forced Marriage in Australia and Globally

Forced Marriage is a growing problem in Australia. In a recent media report an AFP officer reported that in the first six months of the current financial year 45 cases were reported to them. ACRATH members in Western Australia have taken up this issue. Western Australia's Regional Coordinator, Kathy Fagan, describes their activities:

The Forced Marriage project in WA commenced in May 2016 when ACRATH's My Rights – My Future forced marriage Kit of Curriculum Resources for Australian Secondary Schools was published on Anti-Slavery Australia's mybluesky website. Conversations began with other WA agencies about forced marriage and ways to increasingly raise awareness and support those in, or at risk of, forced marriage. Prevention-based strategies, including the education of secondary school students became a focus.

In November 2016 planning began with ACRATH's National Forced Marriage Worker, Liz Payne, to develop the way in which ACRATH members in WA could implement strategies to move forward. This work commenced by linking with the Red Cross in Perth to organise a Forced Marriage Forum for stakeholders in May 2017. ACRATH was part of the Planning Group for the Forum and presented at this most successful event. Since that time ACRATH has worked to increasingly put forced marriage on the radar of other organisations throughout WA. ACRATH's strong links with numerous agencies has facilitated this process. There has been some success working with private schools where students are vulnerable to forced marriage. Both the WA co-ordinator and the ACRATH National Forced Marriage Worker now have the confidence of management and staff to explore inclusion of forced marriage within their curriculum.

To date ACRATH members in WA, in collaboration with the ACRATH National Forced Marriage Worker, have run Professional Development sessions for educators in Government, Catholic and Independent education sectors, have met with Department of Education WA personnel to raise the issue of forced marriage in secondary schools from a protection and prevention perspective, and to make the Kit available through the WA Connect Communities website as well as working with Catholic secondary school staff to embed the Forced Marriage Kit resources into school social justice curriculum. Information sessions have been run for clergy

including priests born overseas and Migrant Chaplains. A small group of WA members of ACRATH were able to attend the Inaugural Forced Marriage Conference in Sydney run by Anti-Slavery Australia. Strong links have been established with the Australian Federal Police in Perth including co-presenting information sessions with them for schools and Catholic School Leaders. Working in collaboration with Anti-Slavery Australia ACRATH has been able to identify ways to increasingly connect with agencies and the community around Forced Marriage. ACRATH has taken a lead role in organising the WA Inaugural Forced Marriage Conference which will take place in Perth on Tuesday March 12th. The ultimate aim of this conference is to establish stronger links with the CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) communities and the establishment of a WA Forced Marriage Network. A professional development session for WA Clergy is also planned for March. This session will also involve the Australian Federal Police. Also in March, ACRATH has organised for a half day Forced Marriage Seminar for Government, Independent and Catholic school Student Well-being Coordinators. This event will also involve the Australian Federal Police. Following on from these events a March planning session is scheduled to identify how ACRATH in WA can strategically move forward with our Awareness-raising and Education work, both with schools and with community groups in WA.

Goal 3: Ensure People Who Have Been Trafficked Can Access Their Rights

ACRATH is not an organisation that provides client services. Nonetheless, the work that we do in providing companionship to survivors of trafficking is centred around ensuring dignity and human rights are respected and accessible, and advocating for these rights when we are aware of gaps. This is the basis of the ACRATH Companionship Programme. ACRATH's NSW Regional Coordinator, Sr Sarah Puls, who is also a member of the ACRATH Companionship steering group reports on the ACRATH Companionship Programme:

“Being a companion, as understood by ACRATH, is being a warm, human presence to women or men who have been trafficked to or enslaved in Australia.

“ACRATH believes that persons trafficked into Australia require support and assistance, and that there is a direct correlation between trauma recovery and the social supports surrounding an individual. As an organisation, ACRATH advocates for appropriate legal, medical and other professional and personal supports for people trafficked into Australia.” [ACRATH policy 5.1 ‘On Being a Companion to a Person Trafficked into Australia’]

During 2018 members of ACRATH provided support as companions to 30 women and 2 men (and indirectly to the 30 children who are accompanying them) who have experienced trafficking and/or enslavement. The ministry of being a companion to a trafficked person requires personal resilience, a commitment to being present and a reliable support to people who have experienced trauma and, often, a history of difficult relationships. Of the 17 ACRATH members who are part of the Companionship Program, 13 were actively engaged as companions in 2018. The way they undertook this ministry is widely varied. Companions may meet up with a person for a casual catch up from time to time or they may be involved in supporting people who are attending court appearances or trying to navigate bureaucratic systems. Other ACRATH members provide support relating to accessing education from basic English to develop confidence, through to further education at University.

Companionship by ACRATH members is often begun when a person is being supported by a caseworker in the Support for Trafficked People Program via the Red Cross, but people are also connected through other organisations who are aware of the program and identify that a trafficked person is in need of this form of pastoral support.

ACRATH members have been walking beside people as companions since the earliest days of ACRATH but over recent years much work has been done to ensure that the members who are part of the companionship program are well prepared and well supported. Our policy document “On Being a Companion to a Person Trafficked in Australia” aims to ensure that members have a common understanding of the role and the limitations of the role of a Companion, and also that we have appropriate procedures in place to ensure the safety of all those involved. Sr Lynne Crilley PBVM generously makes herself available to any member who is in the role of Companion and offers them a space for debriefing and reflection.

We are grateful for the dedication, patience and compassion that is shown by the many ACRATH members who provide this warm, human presence. There are many times when these ACRATH members hear and hold stories of great trauma and loss, when they walk beside people in great pain, and when they stand resolutely in solidarity with people who are trying to rebuild their sense of self and purpose. They bear witness to a fundamental belief in the dignity and worth of the individuals and to the hope that the future will be brighter. We know that their friendship and consistency is so often a key element in bringing healing to lives that have been so fractured and we are grateful.

ACRATH companions have on a number of occasions noted system failures that need ACRATH advocacy to address them. One trafficked person was left in limbo for around nine years waiting for a visa; 6 women needed help to apply for Victims of Crime Assistance.

Goal 4: Promote Slavery Free Supply Chains

Advocating for slavery free supply chains has been a major feature of ACRATH’s work for many years beginning with work around child slavery in the chocolate industry. This work has expanded beyond chocolate to include other products. ACRATH is a member of both the Sydney Archdiocesan Anti-Slavery Taskforce and the Victoria/Tasmania Catholic Anti-slavery Working Group which are aimed at eliminating slavery from the supply chains of all diocesan agencies. An exciting project has been the work with St Vincent’s Health Australia which includes a strong component on slavery in supply chains. An outline of the project is presented by Christine Carolan, ACRATH’s National Executive Officer:

Over the past years ACRATH has had strong ties with the Sisters of Charity that has led to this major joint project with St Vincent’s Health Australia (SVHA). In particular Sr Joan McKenna rsc brokered free health care for trafficked women at St Vincent’s in Melbourne. Sr Louise Cleary csb worked at a global sisters meeting in Rome with Sr Clare Nolan rsc to look at system-wide responses to human trafficking. Out of these and a number of other links has grown a SVHA/ACRATH joint project which is close to the end of its second year of operation. The joint project involves work with 32 SVHA sites across eastern Australia.

The joint project has three aims:

1. To increase the recognition and support of victims of human trafficking who seek health care. Recently staff at one of the St Vincent's hospitals recognised someone who had been trafficked and was able to implement a supportive response for her.
2. To develop a plan to address human slavery issues within St Vincent's supply chains for goods and services. The SVHA spends over \$2 billion in procurement; they are now actively working with their top 50 suppliers of goods and services to identify and address instances of human trafficking. In this part of the project we have worked on joint advocacy about the Modern Slavery Act. We have also faced these questions:
 - Who picked the tomatoes on an Australian farm that are eaten on SVHA sites?
 - How are the workers treated in outsourced cleaning companies?
 - How are the workers in the Malaysian rubber glove factory recruited, and what are their working conditions?
3. To incorporate an awareness of human trafficking into SVHA Communications. In the project to date we have shared ACRATH resources on the 16 days no violence to women and girls; Bakhita day of prayer, reflection and action to stop human trafficking; and the slavery-free Easter Chocolate campaign.

Learnings from this project have been shared at the Catholic Health Australia conference and conversations have begun with other Catholic providers of health and aged care.

Goal 5: Develop our Organisational Sustainability and Influence

While there is always room for improvement, ACRATH's influence in the anti-trafficking and anti-slavery space is acknowledged by many organisations. Acclamation is given especially for ACRATH's awareness raising and advocacy efforts. ACRATH members continue to work with passion and commitment and are not daunted when change does not happen overnight. It is appropriate that we celebrate ACRATH's contribution to the passage of the Modern Slavery Act through the Commonwealth Parliament late last year. ACRATH has always maintained that instead of NGOs working one company at a time to encourage slavery free supply chains there needed to be Federal legislation in place requiring companies to investigate whether there was slavery in their supply chain and, if found, work towards its elimination.

Organisational sustainability continues to be a challenge in terms of finance and membership. ACRATH was not awarded Commonwealth funding in the 2018-2019 funding round. This was a huge blow, especially given the time and energy that went into preparing the funding application. When this news became public the response from Congregations, Dioceses, schools and friends of ACRATH was overwhelming. ACRATH's funding appeal exceeded expectations meaning no project had to be scaled back and staff contracts could be financed to the end of 2019. It has been decided that ACRATH will hold an appeal each year leading up to the UN World Day Against Trafficking in Persons. Throughout 2018, with the assistance of Pamela Whiting, ACRATH submitted a number of grant applications with

some success. Building a sustainable financial base, while at the same time honouring the purpose for which money was donated, will take many years.

Employing the fulltime equivalent of 2.2 staff members, ACRATH is essentially a volunteer organisation. Initially most ACRATH members came from Religious Congregations but the number of lay members is increasing. With increasing age and declining numbers in Religious Congregations, more and more the work will be taken on by lay members. ACRATH would like to attract more younger members. The inability to pay salaries is a drawback here as most young people need full time employment. Meeting times and procedures need on-going review in order to attract younger members. A group of younger people does meet in Melbourne but regular attendance at meetings and the ability to engage in activities is impacted by University and work commitments. ACRATH was grateful to this group for their work preparing a submission for the CEDAW review in 2018.

ACRATH is grateful to our volunteer archivists who are working hard to preserve the ACRATH story.

Reflection Questions

1. Has anything shifted in you since the last break for reflection?
2. Do you have thoughts about actions you can take?
3. Are there further questions rising in you?

(Comments or a prayer from 2 or 3 people)

Appreciation

In concluding this report, it is important to acknowledge those who make it possible for ACRATH to accomplish what it does in the anti-trafficking space. We are blessed with many supporters and generous donors. From day one many religious congregations have been right behind this work by enabling some of their members to actively participate in ACRATH activities without expecting remuneration and by generous in-kind and monetary donations. Special thanks must go to the Brigidine Sisters for providing us with office space in Albert Park and to the Christian Brothers for providing meeting space for National Committee meetings in Parkville. During 2018 a number of Catholic Dioceses around Australia have provided funds to support ACRATH's work. In addition, the Archdiocese of Perth provided ACRATH with office space and equipment which is enhancing the work of ACRATH members in WA.

ACRATH values our relationship with Catholic Religious Australia. We are grateful for the support given from joint media releases, to payroll and employment issues, to distribution of letters and resources and to social media promotions. Thank you to the Council and staff of CRA for your interest and willingness to assist. Support has also come from the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. Each time we visit Canberra we meet with policy development, communication and administrative staff. We appreciate their interest and support. Bishop Vincent is conscious of the impact of ACRATH's work and is willing to support our work. His presence here today, despite his tight schedule, is testament to that.

To the members of the National Committee – Carmel Heagerty rsm, Claire Griffin csb, Janine Bliss fmm, Kathy Fagan, Louise Cleary csb, Meredith Evans rsm, Ray Sanchez cp, Sarah Puls sgs and Shane Wood cfc and from February 2019 Lorraine Phelan rsm, - thank you for your

commitment and leadership within ACRATH. In addition to the time you take to prepare for and engage in ACRATH National Committee meetings we know there is a lot of other work you do that is hidden. Know you are very much appreciated.

ACRATH staff members form the backbone of our organisation. These dedicated people give over and above what they are contracted to do. Christine Carolan, ACRATH's National Executive Officer, ably leads the team of staff members and volunteers. Her many years of experience working in this space, her passion for human rights, her capacity to network and her skill in drawing out giftedness in others are some of the assets she offers to ACRATH.

The work of ACRATH is also supported by an ever-growing band of supporters who have subscribed to ACRATH's e-Newsletters. Present in parishes, school, hospitals and workplaces they assist by raising awareness about human trafficking and promoting ACRATH's campaigns.

Evaluation is an essential part of an organisation achieving its goals. ACRATH is grateful to Erin Cassell, Will Dunn and Bernard Dobson who form the evaluation committee. Their services are offered pro bono. The expertise they bring to this role informs the work that ACRATH does ensuring ACRATH's actions are in tune with our mission and goals.

And last, but not least, appreciation must be expressed for all the members of ACRATH. This diverse group of people spread across our country engage in ACRATH's many and varied activities often in quiet, unnoticed ways because they too are keen to contribute to the vision of eliminating human trafficking and slavery from our world and to see dignity restored to people who have been trafficked. Throughout 2018 ACRATH members donated over 8,000 hours of volunteer time. This is conservatively costed at \$247,300 – a very valuable contribution to ACRATH. Thank you ACRATH members for your passion and commitment.

So, as we face 2019, despite the many challenges before us, ACRATH is not daunted. As Pope Francis reminds us "It is not possible to remain indifferent before the knowledge that human beings are bought and sold like goods!" ACRATH is determined to be a voice of hope for all people who are trafficked or exploited in slave-like conditions. Inspired by the words of our God in the Book of Exodus we want to be instruments of God's healing and compassionate love for these people:

"I have observed the misery of my people...
I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters.
Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them...
And to bring them up out of that land to a land flowing with milk and honey."
(Ex 3:7-8)