

# ACRATH ANNUAL REPORT

**“He sent me to bring good news to the oppressed,  
to bind up the broken hearted,  
to proclaim liberty to the captives.”  
(Is 61:1)**

Catholic Social Teaching reminds us that all people are equal in dignity and calls us to live in right relationship with God, with oneself, each other and with all creation. Created in the image and likeness of God we have rights and with those rights comes responsibility. It is these principles and the Gospel call to heed the cry of the poor that motivates members of ACRATH to engage in the work of eliminating human trafficking and slavery. ACRATH members desire to restore dignity to those who have been, or are being exploited, and to advocate for systemic change that will bring about an end to exploitative practices.

## GLOBAL CONTEXT

The United Nations officially came into existence with the ratification of the UN Charter on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1945. In the Preamble to the United Nations Charter the following statement can be found:

“We the peoples of the United Nations are determined ....to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small.”<sup>1</sup>

ACRATH takes as our ongoing challenge to make the UN global commitment to human rights a reality.

### Palermo Protocol

November 2020 marks twenty years since the UN General Assembly adopted the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Adoption of this protocol was an acknowledgement that effective action to prevent and combat human trafficking requires a comprehensive international approach in the countries of origin, transit and destination. 2020 also marks fifteen years since Australia ratified this protocol.

More commonly referred to as the Palermo Protocol, this instrument requires Member States to:

- prevent and combat trafficking in persons, paying particular attention to women and children;
- protect and assist the victims of such trafficking, with full respect for their human rights;
- prosecute offenders; and
- promote cooperation among States Parties in order to meet those objectives.

In all ACRATH’s dealing with members of Parliament and government departments these objectives are uppermost in our mind.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/sections/un-charter/preamble/index.html> accessed 17th January 2020.

## Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda aims to provide a blueprint for shared prosperity in a sustainable world—a world where all people can live productive, vibrant and peaceful lives on a healthy planet. The year 2030 is now just under a decade away. In the forward to the 2019 report to the UN Assembly on the SDGs Secretary General Antonio Guterres stated:

“It is abundantly clear that a much deeper, faster and more ambitious response is needed to unleash the social and economic transformation needed to achieve our 2030 goals.”<sup>2</sup>

Findings that are of particular interest to ACRATH include:

- The world is not on track to end poverty by 2030
- 70% of detected victims of human trafficking are women and girls most of whom are trafficked for sexual exploitation
- A growing number of trafficking victims are being detected
- Contrary to earlier year findings, globally most trafficking victims are now detected domestically
- Aid levels are falling with aid countries not living up to their pledge to increase overseas development assistance to 0.7% of Gross National Income.
- On a positive note there has been a 40% decline in childhood marriage in South East Asia since 2000.

Every human being has a right to dignity, to food, clothing and shelter, to an education and to be engaged in work that provides a living wage. People living in poverty are not able to access these rights. Their search to have their dreams for themselves and their family realised leaves them vulnerable to being trafficked and enslaved. Alleviation of poverty is therefore a key weapon in the elimination of slavery. From Day 1 ACRATH has advocated for an increase in Australia’s Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). Over recent years Australia’s ODA expenditure has been falling. The 2019/2020 budget predicted ODA spending in this period would be 0.21%, i.e., 21 cents in every \$100 of expenditure. This is the lowest level since 2000, meaning progress made during the period of the Millennium Development Goals has been negated. ACRATH will continue to pressure the Government on this issue.

## Talitha Kum

At a Talitha Kum coordination meeting in 2016 Cardinal Vincent Nichols commented that human trafficking is an international network of criminals and we need international networks to fight against it. Talitha Kum, the International Network of Consecrated Life against Trafficking in Persons, was established by the International Union of Superiors General in 2009. ACRATH is a member of Talitha Kum and for the last four years a member of ACRATH has been the Oceania Regional Coordinator of Talitha Kum. This position is currently held by Colleen Jackson rsc. Colleen has energetically taken up this role connecting with ANZRATH and with conferences of Major Superiors in the Pacific. In 2019 Colleen travelled to PNG where her presentation to leaders of Religious Congregations was well received. More recently she has been in communications with Fiji and it is hoped that networks might eventually develop in these and other countries of the Pacific.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/> accessed 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020

An Assembly was held in Rome in September 2019 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Talitha Kum and to plan for the future. Five participants from Oceania attended the assembly. During the Assembly Louise Cleary csb was one of twelve people who received an award recognising their significant contribution in counter trafficking work. Congratulations Louise. The Assembly concluded with the identification and affirmation of three priority issues for the period 2020-2025:

- The power differential between men and women that contributes to trafficking;
- The economic structures that create vulnerability to trafficking;
- The immigration laws and policies that put people at risk of trafficking.

Reasons for denouncing these issues were outlined and commitments for future collaborative work were made. ACRATH attendees will give a more detailed report on the Assembly later this afternoon.

### Other International Connections

ACRATH has had an on-going relationship with Caritas Internationalis through COATNET. ACRATH's Regional Coordinator in Western Australia has attended seminars and training events organised by COATNET in Asia. Through these experiences she has been able to develop connections that have proved to be invaluable in supporting repatriation of survivors or assistance to Australians being exploited overseas.

ACRATH is also linked to a number of other international networks through UNANIMA International, Mercy International Association Global Action and other congregational initiatives, as well as through other activist groups like the International Labour Rights Federation who provide global insights into issues we work on in common. ACRATH has participated throughout 2019 in a number of global webinars where we have been able to share our own learnings, particularly on advocacy and on counter trafficking work in the health sector. ACRATH has strong links with UN groups based in Geneva, including through Franciscan, Edmund Rice and Good Shepherd initiatives, as well as with the Australian diplomatic mission and also with UN counter trafficking initiatives.

ACRATH has developed a strong link with the Australian Embassy to the Holy See and has had our work focused and amplified by this connection.

### Commonwealth 8.7 Network

In 2019 the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative established the Commonwealth 8.7 Network. The Network grew out of a report submitted to the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting held in the UK in April 2018. It has been setup to facilitate partnership between local, grassroots NGOs that work to combat contemporary forms of slavery in their own Commonwealth countries and serve as a knowledge-sharing platform for country-specific and thematic information and best practice across the Commonwealth. ACRATH was invited, and accepted, to be part of this network.

## **AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT**

As indicated in ACRATH's Annual Report last year, the Australian Parliament passed the Modern Slavery Act in December 2018. Throughout 2019 there have been a number of conferences and seminars to educate NGOs and businesses about the implications of this Act. ACRATH members have availed themselves of opportunities to take part in events organised by the Australian Government and by other agencies. ACRATH has also engaged with organisations, especially within the Catholic Church, to inform them about the

existence of slavery in supply chains, their obligations under the act and how they might comply. ACRATH is not limiting this work to organisations who are obliged to report. Eliminating modern slavery will not be achieved solely through compliance to legislation. We all have a moral responsibility to be informed about the existence of slavery and to contribute to its elimination.

With the Federal election taking place in May 2019, once again there was a new Minister with portfolio responsibility for human trafficking and slavery – The Hon Jason Wood MP, Assistant Minister for Customs, Community Safety and Multicultural Affairs. There was also a restructuring of Government Departments resulting in the Human Trafficking team moving into Australian Border Force. ACRATH has been concerned that such a change might give a more legislative approach rather than a victim-centred approach to responding to human trafficking and slavery. While legislation is important it should be at the service of protecting and restoring human rights and dignity. Over the years ACRATH has valued the relationship with Departmental staff on the Human Trafficking team and this fortunately has continued to be the case since the restructure.

The National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery met in Canberra in December 2019. ACRATH always values the opportunity the Roundtable provides for frank and open discussion with Government, Government Departments and civil society. ACRATH was pleased to hear Assistant Minister Wood announce at the December Roundtable that the Forced Marriage trial that had been in operation for the last eighteen months will now become policy. This means people escaping a forced marriage will be able to access 200 rather than 90 days support from the Support for Trafficked People Programme and will not have to commit to participating in the criminal justice process. ACRATH will continue to advocate that other victims of human trafficking and slavery will also be able to access the programme in a similar way. ACRATH believes that the safety and protection of the person is of prime importance. Once someone is safe and has built up trust in their support networks ACRATH believes people will be more likely to willingly assist in the criminal justice process.

#### Annual Visit to Federal Parliament

The annual visit to Federal Parliament continues to be a key component of the ACRATH advocacy year. Planning a visit in 2019 proved to be difficult as the Federal election in May resulted in changes to the Parliament sitting schedule. However, a small, but nonetheless determined and focused group, spent time in the Halls of Parliament in August. During the visit ACRATH members advocated for four main issues:

- Allocation of a total ex gratia payment of around \$100K to 22 Vanuatu men egregiously exploited by a labour hire firm in Australia. The ex gratia payment would address the non-payment of the workers' salaries, and the theft of their airfares and spending money.
- Implementation of the recommendations of Prof Allan Fels' Migrant Workers' Taskforce to introduce a national labour hire registration scheme
- A boost in the amount of Australia's Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) and a targeting of this assistance on the elimination of the causes of human trafficking projects thus addressing the SDGs 1 and 17.
- Inclusion of a 3-5 year funding of NGOs in the Home Affairs departmental budget under the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery

ACRATH is well respected within the Halls of Parliament and receives a good hearing from Members and Senators, often including the relevant Ministers and Shadow Ministers and their advisors. Of course, success on advocacy issues does not come about as a result of one week of advocacy in Canberra. The situation of the men from Vanuatu is an issue ACRATH has been working on for several years. Perhaps in the early part of 2019 some present in this room were engaged in ACRATH's letter writing campaign to the then Minister for Jobs and Industrial Relations, Kelly O'Dwyer MP, to seek justice for these men. Members of the National Roundtable know that ACRATH will raise the situation each time the Roundtable meets. ACRATH's advocacy has resulted in the case against the Director of the labour hire firm being reinvestigated but the wheels of justice are turning slowly. ACRATH has a strong sense of the injustice experienced by these men; we will continue in 2020 to advocate about their rights.

### **ACRATH'S STRATEGIC PLAN**

In earlier years ACRATH's Strategic Plan was very much linked to the Government Funding cycle and so the plan was organised around financial years. As ACRATH has not been receiving government funding in recent years at its November 2019 meeting the National Committee decided to link the Strategic Plan to a calendar year beginning with the new plan that will be presented to this conference for acceptance by ACRATH Members. The 2020 – 2022 ACRATH Strategic Plan has been developed following on from a facilitated meeting of the National Committee and consultation with each of the ACRATH Regions.

The 2017-2020 plan had five goals:

1. Eliminate Forms of Human Trafficking in Sexual exploitation and Forced Labour
2. Eliminate Forced Marriage in Australia and Globally
3. Ensure People Who Have Been Trafficked Can Access Their Rights
4. Promote Slavery Free Supply Chains
5. Develop our Organisational Sustainability and Influence

ACRATH endeavours to work towards these goals by raising awareness, sharing education resources, acting regionally and nationally, working for systemic change locally and globally, advocating with government and by collaborating with counter trafficking networks.

Commenting on all the activities undertaken by ACRATH members in 2019 would make this report far too long. However, with the assistance of ACRATH Regional Coordinators we will endeavour to give you a snapshot of ACRATH's activities over the last twelve months.

An example of collaborative networking to inform and work towards change can be seen in a project embarked upon by the South Australian members of ACRATH last year which Meredith Evans rsm, Regional Coordinator of South Australia, will now outline.

“In September last year after almost 18 months of planning ACRATH in South Australia, in collaboration with Flinders University Criminology Department and the Australian Red Cross – SA, were co-sponsors of a forum held in Adelaide that brought together around 86 people from all our networks – SA police, Australian Federal Police, Government Departments – Health and Education, Catholic Education Office, St Vincent de Paul Society, Archdiocese of Adelaide, Baptist Care, Lutheran Care, Members of the South Australian Parliament, Young Christian Workers

Movement and people from the wider community. It was such a rich experience in so many ways and provided some really important insights and learnings.

The work that was undertaken by Associate Professor Marinella Marmo, from Flinders University in conjunction with ACRATH to map out the extent of human trafficking in South Australia was the first such study undertaken in S.A. This work “Slavery and Slavery like Practices in South Australia –A Report”<sup>3</sup> provided an excellent framework for the forum. Such a forum could not have happened without extensive, thoughtful conversations over an eighteen month period between Marinella Marmo and Alexandra Baxter from Flinders University, Bernadeth See and Rachna Dixit from Australian Red Cross and Anne Tormey and myself representing ACRATH.

Marinella’s proposal to undertake a scoping study was the initial catalyst that caught our imagination and fired our enthusiasm. We felt that the time was ripe, the key people were available. ACRATH’s National Committee were very supportive. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ACRATH and Flinders University was set in place. THE MOU outlined the intentions of each party to enter into a formal collaborative research agreement and the financial commitments related to this agreement.

We knew that such a report would be an excellent focus point for bringing people together. So, over the months leading up to the September forum, we met on numerous occasions to work out together what we wanted to achieve. We tried to cover all possibilities in contacting our networks through emails, phone, Facebook and personal connections.

After the forum a thorough review was undertaken by the sponsoring organisations. We committed ourselves to a follow up conversation in the new year building on what we had learnt as a planning team. This took place on 28<sup>th</sup> January.

We also need to be faithful to our commitment to people who came to the forum who expressed an interest in attending stakeholders meetings and we need to renew connections with these people. Already it is over three months since we gathered in September and we need to ensure that this happens as soon as possible.

Overall, we believed that such partnerships that we engaged in over a long period of time with the support of Adelaide members of ACRATH was essential to the success of the forum and we want this to continue into 2020.”

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

Awareness raising is an important part of trying to eliminate human trafficking and slavery. Firstly, Claire Griffin csb, Regional Coordinator of Victoria, will outline some activities that members of ACRATH in Victoria were engaged in. Then Janine Bliss fmm, Regional Coordinator of Queensland, will speak of awareness raising activities in Queensland and in particular outreach to rural areas.

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<sup>3</sup> <https://dspace.flinders.edu.au/xmlui/handle/2328/39334> accessed 20th January 2020.

## Victoria

“In 2019, members of ACRATH in Victoria 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. 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, Catholic Education Melbourne, St Vincent’s Health Australia, and the Victorian –Tasmanian Catholic Modern Slavery Taskforce.

Part of our work in 2019 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 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 re 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. We in Victoria are happy to share this awareness-raising work with members in other *Regions*.

A new strategy for improving awareness raising activities is the development of a data base of those activities, the people, contacts, aspects of presentations, etc. We will develop this as a model in Victoria but it might be useful for other regions.”

## Queensland

“Regional Outreach in Queensland began about 6 years ago as a result of discussions around the concept the work in Queensland needed to be bigger than Brisbane. Initially this outreach took the form of visiting schools, colleges, church and community groups.

- as far as Mackay
- Rockhampton, Blackwater, Dingo, Gladstone, Yeppoon, Emu Park,
- and Bundaberg

This led to a commitment to be involved, and work with, the people in Bundaberg to address the issues around labour exploitation and possible trafficking of farm workers.

Currently in Queensland ACRATH promotes the needs of South Sea Islander farm workers on the Australian Government's Seasonal Workers Program (SWP). We have developed the "Bundaberg Project" which addresses:

- Advocacy for the 22 Vanuatuan farm workers who were exploited and experienced 'slave like conditions' while working in Qld in 2014. Their exploitation has been considered by courts in Brisbane at least 7 times since the original judgement in March 2017 describing the men's exploitation as 'egregious'. To date, they still await compensation for wages.
- Pastoral Care assistance to SWP workers
- Networking between local agencies, church groups and the Australian South Sea Islander Association (ASSI)
- Identifying the needs of SWP workers and developing culturally appropriate responses
- Promoting the historical relevance of 'Blackbirding' practices which took place in Queensland, and that many of those on the SWP are direct descendants, or at least aware of the history
- Developing an Induction kit, e.g., life in Australia (using the stove, fridge, electrical appliances etc); English classes (including skills such as conversation, following instructions, filling in forms etc); health issues (diet, and dehydration); cultural practices; driving laws; work conditions and responsibilities; and addressing labour exploitation

Four years ago Regional outreach was extended to include Toowoomba. This was enhanced by visits from ACRATH's Forced Marriage worker, Liz Payne, to promote awareness of Forced Marriage, and engage in visits to local politicians to discuss Labour Trafficking in the region. Forced Marriage Workshops took place in schools/colleges, Catholic Parish Centre, and St Vincent's Hospital. Today, Deirdre Gardner, Liz Payne and Janine Bliss are excited to have met with 5 African woman (from Ethiopia, Kenya, Chad and Sudan) and have begun the **Woman2Woman Program.**"

## **Goal 2: Eliminate Forced Marriage in Australia and Globally**

An October 2019 Australian Federal Police press release indicated that "the number of forced marriage referrals to the AFP has been increasing as awareness of the issue grows and becomes reported: in the 2018/2019 financial year, there were 91 reports across Australia, compared to 11 in 2013/2014 when the offence was first introduced."<sup>4</sup> ACRATH has been involved in work to raise awareness of and prevent forced marriage since well before the introduction of forced marriage legislation. ACRATH's Regional Coordinator in Western Australia, Kathy Fagan, will outline recent initiatives in the region.

"The culmination of a great deal of work by a number of ACRATH members, was the Forced Marriage event of raising awareness and workshops, held 12th-15th March 2019 in Perth.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.afp.gov.au/news-media/media-releases/forced-marriage-awareness-campaign-launched-australia%E2%80%99s-busiest-airport> accessed 17<sup>th</sup> January 2020.



On the first day 120 members of 61 organisations came together for the Inaugural Forced Marriage Conference at the Newman Sienna Centre. The Conference was initiated by ACRATH and collaboratively planned by 7 agencies: ACRATH, the AFP (Australian Federal Police), the Red Cross, ASA (Anti-Slavery Australia), JEDO (Justice, Ecology and Development Office – Archdiocese of Perth), Women and Newborn Health Service and the Women’s Council for Domestic and Family Violence Services.

The Conference provided an opportunity for sharing information and understanding, for identifying WA support services who may be able to assist those in, or at risk of, forced marriage, and for strategically planning a way to work collaboratively to address the needs of those who are vulnerable to this practice within communities through identifying risk factors, the indicators and establishing common Referral Pathways. The Conference also aimed to, and was successful in establishing a WA Forced Marriage Network. This network continued to grow throughout 2019 and now in 2020.

The effectiveness of the conference was seen in action when two weeks later a Forced Marriage victim arrived at a police station and, it was only through the information the DV/Child Protection worker had learned two weeks previously, that they were able to understand what they could do and how to do it while protecting the victim. More forced marriage victims have been identified throughout 2019.

As in many other States the urgent need for safe appropriate accommodation is an urgent issue. The Network has formed a sub-committee, primarily focused on accommodation, to run a pilot project involving 3 refugees.

An Action Research study looking at the immediate needs, the responses and support offered to young people at crisis point when leaving a Forced Marriage situation is being conducted through a joint study which includes professors from 3 universities: Murdoch University, University of WA and Queensland University.

The steering committee are in the process of planning a conference around mid year, inviting Aisha Gill from the UK as the keynote speaker and trainer to ensure best practice.”

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

As already mentioned, the dignity and human rights of every person is a motivating factor of ACRATH’s work. Conscious of their pastoral skills, some ACRATH members are available to act as Companions for people who are recovering from the experience of being trafficked or enslaved. Psychologist Maree Marsh csb, a member of ACRATH in ACT/NSW Region and a coordinator of the project, will outline the work done by ACRATH companions.

“ACRATH companions offer a warm, human presence to women and men trafficked to, or enslaved in, Australia. The work is guided by a spirit of respect and sensitivity with the interest of the person as the foundation of the relationship. The motivation for offering companionship is to assist people to take charge of their own life as much as they are able. Perhaps this is well

expressed as Diarmuid O’Murchu’s notion of *Companionship of Empowerment*. This is always at the heart of the work.

Approximately 30 people, mostly women, were supported by members of ACRATH during 2019. They have been trapped in slave-like working conditions and/or have been trafficked to Australia. As well as being of emotional support, ACRATH members assisted in various practical ways, including provision of food and phone vouchers and networking with agencies/health centres/schools. ACRATH companions are most appreciative of funds being made available from the UN Voluntary Fund for Slavery and from other donors to assist the women and men in practical ways.

In 2019 requests for companion support came from Red Cross, Project Respect and Anti-Slavery Australia. Companions understand the gifts and the limitations of the role and are aware of the imperative that the trafficked person has other professional support people in place. ACRATH members work with the support people and are mindful that their role is one of a companion, not as a professional. If the companions become aware of critical incidents in the individual’s life, the professional support agency is informed. One of the challenges for companions is knowing how and when to put limits on their availability.

In the past two years ACRATH has received funding to run two peer support sessions per year at which ACRATH members offering companionship can share their experiences and also explore the ACRATH Companionship policy and self-care challenges. In 2019 ACRATH companions undertook approximately 17 hours of this peer support – which included sharing, in broad terms, of issues facing those trafficked and how these challenges might be approached, as well as discussions about self-awareness and self-care in the role of companion. The Policy on Companionship is also discussed. Companions appreciate the importance of mentoring/supervision. Lynne Crilley pbvm, a Pastoral Supervisor, has been available for telephone support/mentoring over the year.

The twice-yearly meetings of the companions have proved to be very beneficial - learning new skills, increasing knowledge and gaining confidence in the role. Our thanks to the UN Voluntary Fund for Slavery providing funds for these days and their affirmation of the value of this work.”

#### **Goal 4: Promote Slavery Free Supply Chains**

Many of the goods and services we purchase are tainted by slavery. But how do we prevent this? It is hoped that Modern Slavery Acts passed in 2018 in the Federal and NSW State Parliaments will eventually eliminate slavery in supply chains. ACRATH National Executive Officer, Christine Carolan, will outline ACRATH’s involvement in promoting slavery-free supply chains.

“Remember the slavery free chocolate campaigns starting in Easter 2008? Those campaigns were very successful at persuading individual chocolate companies in Australia (Mars, Cadbury, Nestle, Haighs) to ensure their cocoa was slavery-free. But

it was time consuming approaching each company one by one. So we joined a campaign asking the Federal government to ensure all goods and services in Australia were slavery free; this campaign was successful and the Australian Modern Slavery Act took effect on 1 January 2019.

So where are we now? The Modern Slavery Act is a reporting requirement for companies with a global revenue of over \$100 million and also for the Australian government itself. The Act sets out seven mandatory criteria for the reports; entities must describe their actions to assess and address the risk of modern slavery in the supply chains of the goods and services they use. And another advocacy success is that these reports will be publicly available on an easily searched website.

ACRATH's work across 2019 has been to encourage mainly Catholic groups to develop their response to the Modern Slavery Act's reporting requirements. Across Australia various ACRATH members have worked with Catholic groups to begin the process of answering the seven questions required by the Act. So with St Vincent's Health Australia we began looking at procurement of rubber gloves and also the work of contract cleaning companies. With CRA leaders and stewardship groups we talked about taking initial steps with their Boards and with executive leadership teams to ensure all understand the risk of slavery and what can be done. We have worked with about seven dioceses and archdioceses to ensure they understand the Modern Slavery Act and what is required of them.

One final point is that people can voluntarily report using the reporting requirement template. We are recommending that groups, if they choose to voluntarily report, do so on their own website rather than submitting a formal report to the government."

## **Goal 5: Develop our Organisational Sustainability and Influence**

2020 marks the fifteenth year of ACRATH's existence. As an essentially volunteer organisation, ACRATH is grateful to the many members, religious and lay, throughout Australia who give of their time and energy to participate in the mission of ACRATH. Similarly, ACRATH is blessed to have employed staff who see their work not simply as a job but as a means of making a difference in the lives of those who are vulnerable. Due to the collaborative and selfless efforts of ACRATH members and staff much has been achieved in the last fifteen years and ACRATH has become an organisation with much credibility.

However, when we look at the demographics of ACRATH, despite their level of passion and commitment, some members are needing to reduce their hours of involvement because of age, health or other responsibilities within congregations. At the same time, the work of ACRATH continues to expand. ACRATH is continually being confronted by emerging issues that require attention but because of limited resources is not always able to respond.

Growing ACRATH's membership and ensuring robust finances are on-going challenges for ACRATH. These challenges are intertwined. One of the topics for discussion at this year's conference will be the recruitment of new members and adjustments that need to be made in ACRATH's modus operandi to facilitate this growth. We do currently have some younger members involved but while their contribution is very much appreciated, they are limited in the number of hours they can commit because of their need to earn a living, complete

study, provide for their future, etc. Currently, due to ACRATH's financial situation, employment contracts are on a year by year basis. This does not provide security for a younger person, or even for our current staff.

Especially in more recent years since the loss of Government funding, ACRATH has made determined attempts to attract sources of funding. An annual fund-raising appeal has been implemented. This appeal is centred around the UN Day Against Trafficking in Persons providing an opportunity for ACRATH to raise awareness while also raising funds. Regional groups have taken up the challenge of holding local fund-raising events at other times of the year. ACRATH has also engaged a consultant to assist the National Executive Officer in preparing Grant Applications and reports relating to ACRATH's accountability of how grant money was expended. Of course, submitting an application is no guarantee that funding will be forthcoming. During 2019 ACRATH was successful in receiving grants from the following organisations: UN Voluntary Fund on Contemporary Forms of Slavery, Mary Ward International Australia, Mercy Foundation, Hyways & Byways, Catholic Church Insurances Limited, Sisters of Charity Foundation and St Vincent's Health Australia. We are very grateful to these organisations for recognising the value of ACRATH's work and providing support.

A large proportion of ACRATH's income is still via the commitment and financial generosity of Religious Congregations. They see their financial support of ACRATH as a way of engaging in social justice activities. As congregations continue to diminish it is inevitable that this source of funding will dry up. In the meantime, ACRATH is very grateful for their partnership. Every donation, irrespective of how big or how small, is valued by ACRATH. To all ACRATH's donors we say thank you for your generosity and support.

#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

ACRATH is deeply aware that without the support of a number of organisations and individuals it would not be possible for us to do what we do. We are blessed to receive various kinds of support from so many. This encourages us and motivates us as we set about trying to realise the mission of ACRATH to eliminate human trafficking and slavery. The support we receive from Religious Congregations is overwhelming. This support comes in the form of members of Congregations able to give of their time and also have access to Congregation resources such as phones, vehicles, office equipment, work space and so on. The greater percentage of financial support for ACRATH also comes from Religious Congregations. ACRATH is especially grateful to the Brigidine Sisters for making available space for the ACRATH office in Albert Park, Victoria, and to the Christian Brothers for providing space at their centre in Parkville for ACRATH National committee meetings. A staff member at Parkville also assists with the issuing of Tax Receipts to donors. ACRATH is also grateful to the Archdiocese of Perth for the provision of regional office space for ACRATH in Western Australia.

ACRATH values the relationship we have with Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) and is deeply grateful for the support received. Since ACRATH's beginnings in 2005, the Council and the staff of Catholic Religious Australia have been ever ready to support and enhance the work of ACRATH. This support has been extended through the issuing of joint media statements, payroll management and employment support, distribution of letters and resources, social media promotions and invitations to present a display at the CRA Annual Conference.

ACRATH is grateful for the support received from Bishop Vincent Long Van Nguyen OFM CONV, Bishop of Parramatta and Chair of the Bishops Commission for Social Justice, Mission and Service. Bishop Vincent is always ready to acknowledge ACRATH's commitment and experience, and to include ACRATH in events reviewing the Church's response to human trafficking and slavery.

It goes without saying that every organisation needs committed people willing to take up the responsibility of leadership. ACRATH is blessed to have a National Committee made up of people who, committed to the mission of ACRATH, meet to guide the direction of ACRATH in the light of its founding principles and mission. Carmel Heagerty rsm, Claire Griffin csb, Janine Bliss fmm, Kathy Fagan, Lorraine Phelan rsm, Louise Cleary csb, Meredith Evans rsm, Ray Sanchez cp and Shane Wood cfc thank you for your availability and your wisdom shared so generously.

The dedication, hard work and professionalism of ACRATH staff members, led by National Executive Officer Christine Carolan, is one of ACRATH's great assets. Thank you to each of you for all you do in the name of ACRATH not seeking any personal recognition but desiring to make a difference in the lives of those who have been exploited.

ACRATH is grateful to the evaluation committee - Bernard Dobson, Christine Carolan, Erin Cassell, Louise Cleary csb and Will Dunn – who assess ACRATH's work in meeting the deliverables of the various Grant Commitments and provide advice regarding feedback to various Grant organisations. At their most recent meeting in December the committee acknowledged all deliverables have been met and very often exceeded.

Finally, gratitude must be expressed for the members of ACRATH, those present in this room and those scattered across Australia unable to be with us this week. During 2019 you donated 8,600 volunteer hours. Conservatively costed this is a very generous contribution of \$250,000. Thank you. Your passionate desire to protect human dignity and restore hope to those who have been exploited motivates your contribution to the mission of ACRATH which is very much appreciated.

## **POPE FRANCIS**

In February 2019 when speaking to pilgrims in St Peters Square acknowledging the feast of St Josephine Bakhita Pope Francis commented on the theme for the World Day of Prayer, Reflection and Action Against Human Trafficking.

“Together Against Trafficking!”. Do not forget this. It is a call to join forces to overcome this challenge. I thank all those who fight on this front, in particular many women religious. I appeal in particular to governments, that they may confront with determination the causes of this scourge and that the victims may be protected. However, we all can and must cooperate by reporting cases of exploitation and enslavement of men, women and children. Prayer is the force that sustains our common commitment.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2019/documents/papa-francesco\\_angelus\\_20190210.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/angelus/2019/documents/papa-francesco_angelus_20190210.html) accessed 17th January 2020.

Let us pray together:

Compassionate and loving God,  
we thank you for the gift of time  
to ponder the horrific realities of human trafficking.  
We pledge to do what is possible to stop this local and global tragedy.

May our efforts,  
combined with the efforts of our local and global sisters and brothers,  
transform local and global trafficking realities into dignity and justice for all.

This we ask with great confidence in you,  
our compassionate and loving God. Amen.

(US Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking)