



Special points of interest:

15 members of ACRATH spent a week in Canberra (19-24 August)

Members spoke with 117 Members of Parliament, Advisors, Embassy staff, departmental officials and Church leaders in their continuing endeavours to ensure trafficked people access their human rights.



We were welcomed by members from every state and from the three major parties and one of the independent members. Sometimes the Member was accompanied by an adviser and sometimes just the adviser met with us. Every member I met was gracious, helpful and many congratulated us on our work.

Carol Hogan

Advocacy Points

In our Advocacy week in Canberra, ACRATH acknowledged the current work of the Australian Government, particularly its willingness to collaborate with NGOs, to develop social policy to address the issue of human trafficking.

We raised the following points:

1. ACRATH particularly wishes to encourage Members of Parliament to support the new legislation *Crimes Legislation Amendments (Slavery, Slavery-like Conditions and People Trafficking) Bill 2012*.
2. During her Nov 2011 mission to Australia, the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, Dr Ngozi Ezeilo, noted that Australia has “demonstrated strong leadership in combating trafficking in persons regionally and domestically.” She also affirmed the proposed amendments to the Criminal Code ACT. ACRATH strongly supports her recommendations, especially concerning access to English classes and housing.
3. ACRATH asks 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.
4. ACRATH asks the Australian government to ensure that the supply chain of goods brought into Australia is slave-free.

In the words of Martin Luther King “our lives begin to end the day we become silent on things that matter.”

Received by ACRATH in a letter of good wishes for the week of advocacy.

Accommodation

Nine members stayed at ‘The Gathering Place’ during the Canberra visit. Our hostess during our visit was Lorraine Gatehouse csb, who was always there for us. We are immensely grateful to her, and to her staff members, Meryl and Sue who had seen to our every need.

Some members of the Advocacy team stayed at the Australian Catholic Bishop’s Conference accommodation. We are grateful for the hospitality that is offered to us each year by the Catholic Bishop’s Conference.

Denise Mulcahy fcj



Photos from left:

Margaret and Brianna meeting with Dennis Jensen MP (WA Lib); Anne, Meredith and Carole planning; the staff team—Denise, Noelene and Christine

Outcomes from the Advocacy week



While in Canberra

- The Bill, expanding on earlier anti trafficking legislation, was passed in the House of Representatives while our group was in Parliament.
- Hansard shows that ACRATH was mentioned in 4 speeches in Parliament while in Canberra (see below).
- ACRATH had frank targeted conversations with two Ministers, and the advisors to seven Ministers, re forced marriages, housing, immigration, Special Benefits allowances, access to quality English classes for trafficked people, slave-free supply chains, and Overseas Development Assistance.
- ACRATH followed up these conversations with meetings with departmental officers in the 5 relevant government departments in order to explore achieving their aims.
- ACRATH met with several Senators who are conducting an Inquiry into the new anti trafficking legislation before it will be brought before the Senate.
- On several occasions during the advocacy week, follow-up opportunities and introductions to people were made; these took ACRATH closer to achieving their goals.
- ACRATH met with three Embassy officials from the Philippines, the USA and Timor Leste to raise concerns.
- The team have collated a long list of follow-up work arising from each interview.
- The ACRATH team had been told on many occasions by MPs and by advisors that the ACRATH presence in the corridors of Parliament was highly visible, and that it served as a strong reminder of the work for justice for trafficked people.



After leaving Canberra

- One ACRATH member was interviewed on ABC Rural Radio about her concerns of labour trafficking into rural and regional Australia. So far ACRATH has had responses from people who heard her in the Kimberley, southern WA and NSW. Here's the link to the story on the ABC Rural website – <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/news/content/201208/s3575205.htm>
- An MP has already written to the Attorney General to raise two of our concerns: training of marriage celebrants to ensure they do not unwittingly preside over forced marriages in Australia; and access to English classes for trafficked people in Australia.
- In the week following the advocacy week, the ACRATH office has already been contacted by two Minister's advisors and one government department to see how trafficked people accessing quality government English classes can be achieved. This is trickier than it sounds.

From the top:

- Noelene and Joan with Deputy Speaker Anna Burke
- Meeting with the Departmental Officer, Robyn McDonald (from FaHCSIA)
- Anne celebrates 50 years as a religious
- Meeting with Mr Fitzgibbon MP (ALP NSW)

Hansard

Chris Hayes MP 20 Aug 2012

I would also like to use this opportunity to commend the very good work of the Josephite Counter-Trafficking Project and the Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans. These two organisations do a tremendous job in assisting the victims of people-trafficking...

Melissa Parke MP 21 Aug 2012

I pay tribute to ... the NGOs who work tirelessly with and for trafficking victims, including ACRATH, Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans, with whom I met today and who have been very diligent in raising awareness among parliamentarians and the community ...

Michael Danby MP 20 Aug 2012

In speaking to this legislation I want to praise the work of people who very deeply influenced me in this area, the Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans ... I commend their work and the focus on this important issue that they help bring to this parliament and to parliamentarians.