



Canberra Advocacy Report

September 2015

Advocacy overview

Eleven ACRATH advocates were in Canberra for advocacy from 06 to 11 September. They stayed at the former Brigidine convent run by Lorraine CSB.

The Team spent about 5 hours on Sunday reflecting on the week ahead, and unpacking the two advocacy issues - forced marriage and forced labour. Heather Moore from the Salvation Army Freedom Partnership shared her work on forced and exploited labour.

Planning for Monday appointments also occurred in advocacy sub-groups including dividing up the roles - lead, note-taker and time-keeper, and so they could practise with the briefing paper to each MP.

Over the past couple of years our advocacy strategy has been to meet early in the week with MPs with whom ACRATH has developed strong links. Several MPs on Monday suggested names of other MPs we should secure an appointment with, as well as suggestions on how to sharply focus our advocacy about both issues. They also provided advice about 5 or 6 other ACRATH concerns, eg trafficked people who are falling between the cracks and not being able to access services.



Advocacy Overview

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:

1. ACRATH is asking MPs to address the needs of those in Australia facing forced marriage. ACRATH is advocating for:

- A Pilot Project for flexible entry to the Support for Trafficked People Program, delivered by the Red Cross.
- A two year extension of the successful forced marriage education project being run by ACRATH.

2. ACRATH is asking MPs to address the needs of overseas workers facing forced and exploited labour in Australia.

ACRATH is advocating for:

- The licensing of labour hire companies responsible for placing thousands of overseas workers in Australia. ACRATH is asking Minister Dutton to begin licensing these labour hire companies.
- Prosecutions of exploitative employers of overseas workers under the Migration Amendment (Reform of Employer Sanctions) Act 2013.
- Payment of back wages to overseas workers, even when they are repatriated, for the work they have done in Australia.
- Mechanisms to link overseas workers in to Australian society to ensure they have an independent means for exploring their rights as workers.



Planning meeting on Sunday and work between meetings with MPs recording follow up ideas and preparations for upcoming interviews.

During the four days ACRATH members met with 52 Members of Parliament and Advisors.

Meetings outside Parliament House included:

- Attorney General's Department
- Philippines Embassy
- The Salvation Army Freedom Partnership
- Australian Federal Police
- Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Commissions for Women and for Pastoral Life

Outcomes from the Advocacy week

We have had some remarkable uptake of our key issues.

We met with a Minister, ministerial staff and Shadow Ministers on our proposal to have a flexible entry to Services for people facing a forced marriage, enabling groups other than the Australian Federal Police to refer trafficked people into the Services. We believe we have traction on this. This could make such a big difference to the lives of trafficked people. We also received a lot of support regarding the future funding of the Forced Marriage Pilot Project.

Many MPs were concerned about the issue of exploitation of foreign workers, particularly with the current media spotlight and the ongoing Senate Inquiry. We were able to promote the idea of licensing of labour hire companies to begin the process of asking for election promises on this issue.

We had good advice about how we can move forward on some of our other concerns including:

- How to get Social Services to finish their commitments to the new visa package
- How to achieve a more compassionate response to women who fall between the cracks in services

Reflections from the week

After two days of advocacy we can say we have had some remarkable uptake of our key issues and some good advice about how we can move forward on some of our other concerns. We have had positive engagements right up to Ministerial level on our proposal to have a flexible entry to Services for Trafficked People, enabling groups other than the Aust Federal Police to refer trafficked people into the Services. This could make such a big difference to the lives of trafficked people.

On Tuesday we saw two very senior MPs, one from the Government, the other from the opposition. As we were leaving both said they were happy to give us time as we were doing good work.

Overall, many in the Advocacy team thought the week was a success, particularly the advocacy around issues that are very topical at the moment and the willingness for many MPs to address the various issues we raised. 10 years of advocating at Parliament with various MPs, advisers and parliamentary staff has certainly spread the ACRATH name and the success we continue to have with various MPs who have an ongoing relationship with us.



ACRATH acknowledges the recent positive changes to the Human Trafficking Visa Framework. Renaming the visas, and the improved access to Social Services attached to those visas, will greatly assist people trafficked into Australia in rebuilding their lives.

ACRATH also applauds the establishment of the Supply Chains Working Group of the National Roundtable on Human Trafficking and Slavery. This working group is now examining the existence of forced labour and trafficking in the supply chain of goods produced in, and also imported into, Australia.

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