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People are NOT for sale

ACRATH News

Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans

November 2022

ACRATH appeals for Support - Please Give Now

ACRATH is appealing to members and supporters to donate money to the organisation as a Christmas gift this year. Without a major funding boost some of ACRATH's critical programs, will need to be wound up at the end of 2023.

Australians are expected to spend about \$24 billion on Christmas this year. ACRATH is hoping some of that will be donated to the organisation, or donated in a person's name in lieu of a gift.

"We also hope that some supporters who have donated to us previously will respond to this appeal," said ACRATH executive officer Christine Carolan. "

"What better Christmas gift to give than knowing your donation will help support a victim/survivor of human trafficking heal and begin a new life."

In its October meeting, ACRATH's National Committee reported the organisation's funding model was not sustainable beyond 2023.

Christine said the demand for ACRATH's services had increased and it was now costing more to deliver programs each year. ACRATH programs receive no government funding.

"The needs of the community to respond to human trafficking and modern slavery are sadly greater than ever. We must do this work and we need people to work with us by donating to keep our programs going," Christine said.

Financial resources this year have been spent on many important programs and projects to prevent human trafficking, including:

- Another year of advocacy with Members of Parliament, one result being the success in one of ACRATH's key advocacy issues. On Budget night we saw in the Attorney General's budget plan the setting up of a new unit within the Attorney-General's Department to establish an Anti-Slavery Commissioner to work with business, civil society and state and territory governments to support compliance with Australia's Modern Slavery Act 2018 and address modern slavery in supply chains. (see newsletter story)
- Supporting 36 trafficked women and their 45 children within our Companionship program. We are now also training three new Companions.
- A planned launch on November 25th of the 16 days of activism against gender-based violence campaign, which runs until 10th December. It focuses on the needs of victims and survivors of human trafficking with calls to action and a range of free resources to download. (see newsletter story)
- Eight online training sessions for healthcare workers across Australia and Timor Leste to raise awareness of human trafficking and what healthcare workers can do to identify and safely refer to the relevant authorities. We have been told that one person ACRATH trained just recognised a trafficked woman in her Emergency Department and was able to safely refer her on for help.
- Launch of our new website which provides free information, statistics and reporting and referral pathways on modern slavery, forced labour and forced marriage. Visit us now: acrath.org.au

By donating to ACRATH this Christmas, or donating in a person's name in lieu of a gift, you will be helping ACRATH keep our life saving programs going through 2023 and beyond.

Thank you. Christmas peace for you and your world.



ACRATH's dogged advocacy pays off

Many years ago ACRATH, alongside other NGOs, began advocating for a Modern Slavery Act in Australia and an independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to oversee that Act. The Act was passed in 2018 and the appointment of a Commissioner is now a step closer. ACRATH's dogged advocacy is paying off.

On Budget night in October ACRATH was delighted to see in the Attorney General's budget plan the setting up of a new unit within the Attorney-General's Department to establish an Anti-Slavery Commissioner to work with business, civil society and state and territory governments to support compliance with Australia's Modern Slavery Act 2018 and address modern slavery in supply chains.

Advocacy, including an annual calendar of meetings Members of Parliament and civil society leaders, has become a central plank of ACRATH's work. In fact, the appointment of an Anti-Slavery Commissioner was one of the key advocacy points discussed when ACRATH met with Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus before the Budget announcement.

ACRATH's Cindy Bohan, who coordinates the training of the team of volunteer 'advocates', believes an Anti-Slavery Commissioner has the potential to change how companies comply with the Modern Slavery Act of 2018. She said there was recognition in the sector that the Act needed to become more rigorous in the area of compliance.

"The Act is a great first step, but there are lots of questions around it. Has it become a box ticking exercise, should there be penalties for non-compliance and how do we build the capacity of people to better respond to the Act in a meaningful way?" Cindy asked.

"ACRATH doesn't want companies to simply tick boxes; we want the Act viewed as a piece of legislation that can really lead to changes in the way people, involved in supply chains, are treated."

"We believe an Anti-Slavery Commissioner will have clout and can make these changes and ACRATH is keen to contribute to developing the Commissioner's role. We called for the Anti-Slavery Commissioner in 2018 but it didn't get through Parliament. We didn't stop then and we will continue to advocate until we have a Commissioner in place, making the changes that are needed."

ACRATH's Executive Officer Christine Carolan said ACRATH wanted to see a timeline for the appointment of the Commissioner and a budget for the funding of the unit, set out in the Federal Government's 2023 May Budget.

ACRATH continues to advocate on a range of other issues including, additional pathways onto the Support for Trafficked People Program, the implementation of a National Compensation Scheme for victim/ survivors and an increase to Overseas Development Assistance.



Picture: Christine Carolan and Cindy Bohan with Mark Dreyfus.

Call to action November 2022

ACRATH supports the work of many like-minded organisations both in Australia and globally. Many produce resources that can be used in a variety of settings and some have campaigns underway. Our newsletter regularly includes this page, encouraging people to find out more and consider becoming involved in actions.

Global estimates of modern slavery

50 million people worldwide in modern slavery

https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_855019/lang-en/index.htm

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime: Human Trafficking and Migrant Smuggling

<https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/index.html>

Know what you are buying

Fair Trade Association 2022 Christmas Shopping Guide is now available and can be accessed here

<http://www.fta.org.au/>

Baptist World Aid: Get Your Copy of The Ethical Fashion Guide

<https://baptistworldaid.org.au/resources/ethical-fashion-guide/>

Australia's news reports on modern slavery issues

Trafficked: Women shunted 'like cattle' around Australia for sex work

<https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/trafficked-women-shunted-like-cattle-around-australia-for-sex-work-20221018-p5bqnd.html>

Modern slavery, forced marriages rise to 50 million amid pandemic and conflicts

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-09-12/modern-slavery-forced-marriages-rise-ilo-says/101431124>

Inside the 'pig-butcher' scams seeing thousands trafficked into cyber slavery

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-09-16/cambodia-human-trafficking-online-scam-pig-butcher/101407862>

Federal police fear hike in child forced marriage cases as overseas travel restrictions lift

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-09-04/nsw-forced-marriage-police-fear-spike-as-travel-resumes-/101317834>

Forced labour taking place in China's Xinjiang region, UN's top slavery expert says

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-08-18/xinjiang-forced-labour-china-un-slavery-expert/101347992>

More about our global network

U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking

<https://sistersagainsttrafficking.org/>

Stop Trafficking Newsletter

<https://sistersagainsttrafficking.org/stop-trafficking-newsletter/>



Judy tells Companionship story

Judy Lamb, a volunteer with ACRATH in Victoria, is the perfect person to explore and document the impact of ACRATH's Companionship Program on the organisation's advocacy work. She has spent almost a decade as a volunteer companion to a family supported by the Brigidine Asylum Seeker Project and 15 years ago she helped the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart celebrate their centenary by producing a series of books featuring stories of the congregation's Sisters.

"I have loved this work and feel privileged to be able to do it. I think my years as a companion and friend to the asylum seeker family has given me an insight into the experiences of ACRATH Companions and how they inform the organisation's advocacy work. Documenting the stories of the OLSH Sisters also gave me the experience of listening to someone share a very important part of their life," Judy said.

ACRATH's 13 trained and supervised volunteer Companions offer support and friendship to 34 trafficked women and their 45 children as they face the long journey of healing.

Judy has begun, through interviews with Companions, documenting what many have suspected for years – that the Companions are an important link between trafficked people and the policy development that comes from advocacy by NGOs, including ACRATH.

Judy's research will look at four areas, including:

- each Companion's involvement and experiences in the program and any challenges they face.
- how each Companion sees their work impacting advocacy, lobbying and awareness raising by ACRATH.

Judy has already interviewed several Companions and will also interview some of those who support the Companions, including steering committee members, supervisors and people from key organisations including Anti-Slavery Australia. Judy will also interview ACRATH members involved in advocacy work in order to explore the Companionship-advocacy links. Judy will not be interviewing any trafficked women.

"I am formalising what many in the organisation know, but it's important to document experiences so that the information can be readily available for advocacy, fund-raising and story telling," Judy said. "It's an organic process that might offer new insights as I go along. Some Companions may share ideas about how things could be done differently and I am open to hearing that."

"For me one of the immediate benefits of the project is acknowledging the work of the Companions even though they do not want any praise for their work. What they do is extraordinary."

Judy said her initial interviews have already revealed beneficial networking amongst the Companions and other NGOs to ensure the best outcome for the trafficked women.

"It is such a privilege to be a companion to someone; to be with them through so many ups and downs and to be able to help in some way," Judy said.



Use new guide to make change

Speak Out is the message in the recently launched 2022 Baptist World Aid (BWA) Ethical Fashion Report. Researchers are asking consumers to use the report as a way of demanding higher standards from their favoured fashion brands. The report's authors demanded fashion brands 'escalate action to address modern slavery, worker exploitation and unsustainable environmental practices throughout their supply chains'.

The call to consumers to Speak Out comes after the report revealed:

- Just 10 per cent of fashion brands pay a living wage at any factories in the final stage of the supply chain.
- Fashion companies average just 29 out of 100 on the ethical supply chain benchmark.
- 40 per cent of companies don't know who supplies their raw materials and have no project to trace them.
- New to the report in 2022, footwear brands performed well below industry average (23/100). None of the footwear companies pay a living wage at any stage of their supply chain.

The report states that, "millions of workers in the global fashion industry face injustice, abuse, low wages, and modern slavery. The way we produce clothes and shoes—and the endless demand for more—is having a detrimental impact on local communities, their lands and waterways, and even the air they breathe. While the industry is responsible for up to ten per cent of the world's greenhouse gas emissions, it's a problem that affects us all. So we're lifting the lid on what's happening in the supply chains of the biggest fashion brands, to create momentum for change."

BWA offers a compelling assessment of clothing brands. Read it at: <https://baptistworldaid.org.au/2022/10/17/ethical-fashion-report-media-release/>

ACRATH's Ange Duthie, who attended the launch said ACRATH supported the push for consumers to learn more and to Speak Out against brands doing very poorly. The speak-out tool on the Baptist World Aid website sends a pre-written email to brands, thanking them for their action or asking them to do better.

"We want our supporters to use the guide as a source of information about brands and as a call to action. There are some positive moves by some brands and they need to be congratulated. But where a brand is doing really poorly then we must Speak Out using that tool on the Baptist World Aid website. Consumer pressure has the potential to shift some of these companies."

Living Wage

Sarah Knop, Corporate Advocacy Lead at BWA said, 'Cost of living is a concern for many Australians in 2022, but for most of the world's garment workers, earning a living wage is a lifelong struggle. Only one in ten fashion companies assessed pay a living wage in the final stage of production—even less in the earlier stages of the supply chain.'

Two of Australia's most ethical garment manufacturers have boycotted the Baptist World Aid Ethical Fashion Report this year, shining a light on the failure of too many in the industry to pay garment workers a living wage.

ETIKO and Outland Denim, which received the highest grade possible in last year's report, have decried the progress being made by so many large successful companies in paying a just wage to workers.

Etiko's founder and director, Nick Savaidis, said in his recent blog that, "brands not paying a living wage to textile workers and supply chain staff – like cotton growers – they shouldn't be given a pass mark in the report."

Outland Denim said not being part of this year's report was a difficult decision to make. It applauded some parts of the report, supported the efforts of BWA and encouraged consumers to use it (the report) to 'Shop with impact'.

Outland Denim made a public statement on social media around the time the report was released. "Ultimately our worry was that brands who are not prioritising people were still able to get a good score, and this doesn't best serve garment makers or you as a consumer reading the report," Outland Denim said in the statement. It also encouraged readers to go beyond the social media 'tiles' and go to the report to better understand how a brand is progressing.

"We are encouraged to see that 63% of brands have made credible commitments to paying living wages in their final stage facilities," Outland Denim said in its statement.

Use new guide to make change continued...

Speak Out

Speak Out to brands: Pleased with your favourite brand? Disappointed? Let them and your network know, good and bad.

1. Go to the Baptist World Aid Ethical Fashion Report site: <https://baptistworldaid.org.au/resources/ethical-fashion-guide/>
2. Scroll down to Find Your Favourite Brands and fill in a brand you'd like to investigate
3. Select that brand to find out their score in 2022 and send off the pre-written message to this brand asking them to lift their game.

This took four minutes to do. Speak Out! Use your consumer voice!

Join our national conference/online gathering

ACRATH would like to invite you, our members and supporters, to join our national conference/ online gathering on Wednesday 3rd May 2023. The conference will be an online event and you are welcome to attend any or all of the sessions.

A detailed program of speakers, times and zoom links will be published in our newsletter and website in early 2023.

Do save the date in your diary - all who might want to know more about ACRATH are welcome.



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**Visit ACRATH's new website
at acrath.org.au**

ACRATH needs core business funding and additional funding for special projects.

Please consider a regular donation to ACRATH so that we can plan ahead. Thanks.

<https://www.trybooking.com/au/donate/acrath>
or <https://acrath.org.au/donate>

Donations of \$2 or more are tax deductible

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