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**Australian Catholic Religious
Against Trafficking in Humans**

ACRATH PRESS RELEASE

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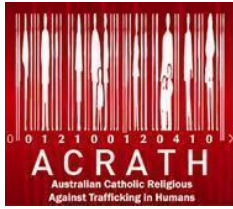
ACRATH celebrates milestone advocacy success

ACRATH has hailed the Federal Government's Budget decision to offer victims and survivors of human trafficking the opportunity to access support without involvement with law enforcement, as a momentous achievement. It comes after a 17 year battle by ACRATH.

Before last night's announcement, a trafficking victim's ability to access the Support for Trafficked People Program (STPP) was dependant on their capacity to assist police in a criminal investigation or prosecution. ACRATH began advocating for this to change in 2006, along with Professor Jennifer Burn, now Head of Anti-Slavery Australia, in a submission to the UN that said:

"Currently a trafficking victim's ability to access the Victim Support Program is contingent on their capacity to assist police in a criminal investigation or prosecution. Trafficking victims, who are not involved in the law enforcement and criminal justice process, have been left to find care and support from members of community and religious organizations. We believe that the Program should be extended to all victims of trafficking. Victims of trafficking have many and complex needs. We recommend that the Government consider widening the Victim Support Program to guarantee that all victims of trafficking receive access to comprehensive health care services, residential and vocational support, and legal and migration advice".





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ACRATH executive officer Christine Carolan said the Budget announcement was one of the most important decisions ever made by the Federal Government in support of victim/survivors of human trafficking.

“For almost two decades we have tenaciously raised this issue with ministers and public servants. And about 5 years ago we joined an NGO network to work intensively to achieve this. This change will make such a difference to so many people, especially those who have been trafficked but who don't want to speak about their circumstances with the police,” Christine said.

Christine said advocacy over the years has been informed by the victims and survivors in ACRATH's Companionship program who told ACRATH that they needed to access support without involving police - they were frightened of the police; they were anxious for their own or their family's safety and they were worried about their immigration status.

ACRATH also raised these concerns in awareness raising programs and workshops with healthcare workers who affirmed the need for an additional pathway to support.

“The program, announced in the Budget means a victim/survivor will be able to ask for support with accommodation, healthcare, counselling, legal matters and other issues because they have been trafficked and need a hand. We don't believe that someone who has experienced trafficking should be able to access this support only if they will help with a prosecution. And last night we have achieved this,” Christine said.

The Attorney General's Department gave ACRATH advance notice in an email to National Roundtable members and modern slavery stakeholders, announcing: a measure sponsored by the Department of Social Services, is the provision of \$24.3 million over four years from 2023-24 for the Support for Trafficked People Program, with \$5.9 million per year ongoing. The measure will increase the length of time that support is available for victim-survivors, will provide additional types of support, and will introduce an additional referral pathway to enable victim-survivors to access the program through a community service provider without direct engagement with law enforcement. The additional referral pathway will be trialled through a pilot to commence in 2024, continuing for up to 18 months.

Another long held advocacy target was also achieved in last night's Budget when the Government delivered on an election promise to establish an Anti-Slavery Commissioner. The budget provides \$8 million over four years from 2023-24, with \$2 million per year ongoing, to set up this important role. The Commissioner will work across Government, industry and civil society to support compliance with the Modern Slavery Act; improve transparency supply chains; and help fight the scourge of modern slavery in Australia and globally.

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