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People are NOT for sale



*Please STOP. This is one of those rare big advocacy success moments.*

On Tuesday night, in the federal budget, we heard the big news that the federal government will fund a project to offer victims and survivors of human trafficking the opportunity to access support WITHOUT having to speak with law enforcement. ACRATH has been advocating for this for 17 years. And about five years ago, we joined an NGO network to work intensively to achieve this. This change will make such a difference to so many people, people who have been trafficked but who don't want to speak about their circumstances with the police. And last night we did it!

ACRATH heard from the victims and survivors in our Companionship program 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; they were worried about their immigration status. We raised these concerns in our awareness raising with healthcare workers, and they affirmed the need for an additional pathway to support. We in ACRATH then began advocating for this much-needed change. We want a victim/survivors victim/survivor to be able to ask for support with accommodation, healthcare, counselling, legal matters etc., 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.

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.**

And just while we are here. In the budget we also achieved another long held advocacy target; it is announced in the same email from the AGD:

The ... delivery of our election commitment 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 abroad.

It is such a day for celebration! This is such a serious 'whacko' moment. As advocates for change, we rarely stop and note a major victory because we can always see that there are so many more aspects of the struggles ahead. But I am proposing that everyone should today stop and make some celebratory gesture for ourselves and our networks. We did it. And we did it together. We took diverse roles in this, and together we succeeded. And yes, of course, this is a pilot, and in a minute we need to work to ensure this is a successful pilot.

But first, the whacko moment!

Peace

Christine Carolan  
National Executive Officer



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