

ACRATH back in Canberra

ACRATH is back in Canberra, visiting Members of Parliament and policy makers face-to-face, after three years of online advocacy, the result of COVID-19 travel restrictions. In the first week of September the team of 11 staff and volunteers met with a range of people in a bid to raise awareness and advocate for better outcomes for victims and survivors.

The COVID driven physical absence from Canberra gave ACRATH's Canberra advocacy team the chance to develop important online connections and networks with MPs and staff, relationships that continue today.

Cindy Bohan, ACRATH's community development worker, said COVID forced ACRATH to find another way to advocate and influence policy development. But the face-to-face meetings were a welcome return for the team. Team members met with a range of people including Ms Lynn Bell, the Ambassador to Counter Modern Slavery, People Smuggling and Human Trafficking, Tony Burke, Minister for Industrial Relations, Andrew Giles the Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs and Philippines Ambassador Ma. Hellen B. De La Vega.



The issues raised with key policy makers included the need for:

- A National Compensation Scheme for Victims and Survivors of Modern Slavery
- A National Labour Hire Licensing Scheme
- An independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner.

Unusually this year the advocacy team is also thanking the government for its work! The team is acknowledging the Federal Government's commitment on Budget night to accept as a pilot scheme the model of an additional pathway onto the Support for Trafficked People Program (STPP); this need for an additional pathway has been a lobbying issue for ACRATH, and for several other NGOs, for 17 years!

The Canberra team this year was ACRATH staff Cindy, Christine Carolan, Sr Taabeia Ibouri sgs and Ange Duthie, national committee member Shane Wood cfc (Vic), and regional representatives Noelene Simmons sm (NSW), Angela Hart (SA), Mary Cameron (Vic) and Rae Cook and Sr Martina sja (WA). In the lead up to the four days (September 4 to 7) of intensive meetings, the team participated in training workshops on the issues, including a workshop on the National Compensation Scheme for Victims and Survivors of Modern Slavery presented by Professor Jen Burn, Director of Anti-Slavery Australia.

"Over many years, and especially during COVID, we developed very strong relationships with Members of Parliament through online meetings and networks that were developed to ensure the issues remained front and centre. But there are new people in Parliament change and ACRATH wants to keep these four important issues on the radar of all Members of Parliament," Cindy said.

"We go to Canberra hoping to make progress in certain areas, but to also acknowledge the good work that is being done. The Modern Slavery Commissioner is a good example. We applauded the decision made in the last federal budget, but ACRATH maintains that such an office must be independent of government and accountable to Parliament. We believe this office should have wide-ranging responsibility to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute slavery offences. We believe the Commissioner should have the brief to enhance victims' and survivors' rights and that was the case we took to Canberra," Cindy said.

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ACRATH back in Canberra continued...

While the meetings with Members of Parliament are over for now, ACRATH team members will follow up and continue pursuing the four issues, often with support from MPs. Cindy said many MPs offered advice on next steps, referred ACRATH to other influential decision makers or requested resources on issues.

“This year’s visit to Canberra built on the last 17 years of advocacy, and some of the issues we discussed were ones we have raised again and again and we will keep doing that because that’s what leads to change for victims and survivors of human trafficking– persistent advocacy,” Cindy said. Shane Wood cfc echoed Cindy’s comments: “Long-term advocacy in this space is the lived-experience of ACRATH members. Some of the measures that are coming into view now have been on the agenda for our visits to Canberra for many years, particularly the licensing of Labour Hire companies. Changes of government, changes of Ministers, changes in public awareness, are all factors in making progress sometimes quite slow in this space. However, persistence can sometimes be rewarded.”

For [more information](#) about the key issues discussed in Canberra.

Opportunity to support ACRATH

Don Sinclair was interested when he heard ACRATH staff and volunteers described by a friend as ‘warriors’. He was ‘hooked’ when he heard that they work to combat human trafficking in Australia.

Don, chair of the Uniting Op Shop at Forest Hill in Melbourne heard about human trafficking earlier this year after a member of the Committee came to a monthly meeting suggesting a donation be given to ACRATH to continue its fight against human trafficking. Don did his own research and was shocked to learn that human trafficking in the form of forced labour, sexual exploitation and forced marriage happens in Australia.



The committee donated \$1000 to ACRATH in July and intends to make regular contributions and to ensure that the op shop’s 50 volunteers and committee members know about ACRATH’s work.

“It was an absolute eye opener to me. I knew it happened in other countries, but not here in Australia,” Don said.

The Uniting Op Shop, located in a 120-year old church hall at 333A Canterbury Rd, Forest Hill, distributes all its profits to charities. The growing success of the shop means organisations like ACRATH can rely on regular funding and plan programs, knowing they can be funded.

Donations also mean advocacy can be done on important issues affecting trafficked people. The September advocacy trip to Canberra, explored in more detail in this newsletter, could lead to life-changing policy developments affecting trafficked people. The annual Canberra advocacy visits require training for staff and volunteers, resources and the costs associated with a week in Canberra visiting MPs and departmental officers. All of this requires funding.

Don, who began volunteering with the op shop in 2014 and took over as chair in 2021, said the op shop was closed during COVID’s 20 months of lockdowns. During that time the building was restored and internally made fit for purpose as an op shop.

The Op Shop began in 2007 and earned \$7000 in its first year. When COVID hit in early 2020 the Op Shop was earning \$45,000 a year. The Op Shop reopened after COVID in November 2021 and by the end of 2022 earnings were up to \$60,000. This year sales are expected to be around \$72,000.

“We work hard at the op shop because we see our role as fund raisers so that organisations like ACRATH can do the work they do, knowing they have money to do it,” Don said.

Two Victorian ACRATHers attended the op shop’s August committee meeting and shared more details about the work of ACRATH. That information will be shared with all the op shop’s 50 volunteers.

The Uniting Op Shop at 333A Canterbury Rd, Forest Hill is open six days a week (closed Sunday) between 9.30am and 1pm.

Advocacy in Canberra works

ACRATH's team of staff and volunteers met with many senior Members of Parliament, advisors and departmental officers in Canberra during a week of advocacy to discuss four key human trafficking [issues](#). ACRATH's Executive Officer Christine Carolan reflects on the week in this insightful Q & A.

Q. Who were some of the key Members of Parliament the ACRATH advocacy team met during the advocacy week in Canberra?

A. The meeting with Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus stood out for me because it was a lot more than ACRATH 'delivering' key asks or issues. In our 30 minutes with the Attorney-General we discussed why Australia needs a federal compensation scheme and the role of states in providing compensation for victims of crime, and the differing situations for victims of federal and state crimes. We shared with Mark the shocking story of a survivor of human trafficking, supported by ACRATH, who was threatened with a costs order against her in a Victorian regional Victims of Crime Tribunal when she was clearly a victim of a federal crime. Together with the Attorney-General we explored ways forward. Along with key organisations like Anti-Slavery Australia we identified follow-up actions from this conversation.

Q. While in Canberra you witnessed Tony Burke Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations introduce legislation into Parliament that will require minimum wages and working conditions for workers without ongoing contracts. Why is this proposed workplace reform significant?

A. ACRATH has worked to prevent the exploitation of seasonal workers. Over the years we have learned of seasonal workers being terribly exploited, underpaid (or not paid) and overcharged for accommodation and other costs. In one instance involving workers from the Pacific our advocacy helped rectify the injustices against these workers and they received some payment. This reform will mean better working conditions for seasonal workers and real consequences for employers who withhold, or refuse, payment.

ACRATH Members with
the Hon Mark Dreyfus, MP (Attorney

Q. The ACRATH team in Canberra included some people with many years of advocacy experience and some novices. Did this approach work?

A. All team members participated in training so that there was a high degree of competency. One of the training sessions was a workshop on the National Compensation Scheme for Victims and Survivors of Modern Slavery presented by Professor Jen Burn, Director of Anti-Slavery Australia.

Yes, the advocacy trip to Canberra was about taking issues about human trafficking to people who can bring about change. But it was also about building our capacity. We now have people who can go back to their regions, knowing they are part of a network, and with skills to influence change.

Q. You went to Canberra with a list of our issues. Did you come away wiser?

A. Yes we did. We came away from robust and productive conversations with a lot of tasks to further the issues we raised. Importantly, we will now do more work on the online sexual exploitation of children. This issue was not one of our four key points, though it was discussed in several meetings.

Q. Was there a ta-dah moment?

A. There were many, but perhaps one was when the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Tony Burke, Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and Environment Minister Tanya Plibersek recognised our ACRATH group in the gallery watching the introduction of the workplace relations legislation. I felt this was an acknowledgement that we have a relationship with government that means we have a chance to speak for justice and be heard.

Q. So advocacy works?

A. I am convinced that sustained advocacy on issues can bring about change. The compensation issue is one that ACRATH, and other organisations have worked on for many years. Our meeting with the Attorney-General left an impression with me – he wants to make changes and I believe he will.



Call to action September 2023

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 and advocacy.

A couple jailed for keeping a slave in their Melbourne home have been ordered to pay their victim more than \$485,000 for years of "unpaid wages" in the first payment of its kind in Australia, according to Melbourne's Age newspaper. [Read here.](#)

'Reach every victim' and 'leave no one behind': Sisters combat human trafficking

Sisters share what their congregations are doing internationally to eliminate this grave offense against human dignity.

<https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/reach-every-victim-and-leave-no-one-behind-sisters-combat-human-trafficking>

Slavery is a growing problem. How should Australia respond? Melissa Halliday, ACRATH employee

<https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/modern-slavery-and-australias-response>

Doing Theology and Theological Ethics in the Face of the Abuse Crisis, Global Theological Ethics

Edited by Daniel J. Fleming, James F. Keenan SJ and Hans Zollner SJ; Published April 2023

Modern slavery is on the rise in Australia

<https://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/modern-slavery-is-on-the-rise-in-australia-heres-how-this-state-plans-to-combat-it/1jqyt8pq5>

Linx Employment exits Pacific Australia Labour Mobility scheme amid worker treatment investigation

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/rural/2023-07-24/linx-employment-quits-palm-scheme/102630460>

Man charged with trafficking over alleged scheme

<https://www.news.com.au/national/victoria/courts-law/corey-salvemini-man-charged-with-trafficking-over-alleged-scheme-to-leave-wife-stranded-overseas/news-story/83cc12c156aed733af8d759ad309e685>

Melbourne woman convicted of slavery handed more jail time over bid to intimidate victim

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-07-07/melbourne-slavery-jail-sentence-for-threatening-victim/102575812>

Catholics in South Sudan voice alarm over forced marriage

<https://cruxnow.com/church-in-africa/2023/06/catholics-in-south-sudan-voice-alarm-over-forced-marriage>

Modern Slavery Act Review

<https://www.foreignminister.gov.au/minister/penny-wong/media-release/modern-slavery-act-review>

Dutch King apologises for Netherlands' historic involvement in slavery

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-07-02/dutch-king-apologises-for-netherland-historic-role-in-slavery/102551204>

Baptist World Aid: Ethical Fashion Report, Special Edition 2013-2023

<https://baptistworldaid.org.au/ethical-fashion-special-edition/>

MECPATHS

<http://mecpaths.com/>

Human trafficking and homelessness

<https://sistersagainstrafficking.org/monthly-reflection/>

Talitha Kum

<https://www.talithakum.info/en/news?lang=en>

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>

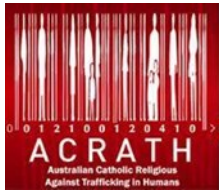
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People are NOT for sale

Get ready for the new year and order your 2024 Calendar today!

OFFERING SUPPORT

We walk alongside victims and survivors of human trafficking; in 2023 we are providing support to 41 women and their 40 children. We also reach out to seasonal workers from Timor Leste and the Pacific, linking them with local communities in Australia.

ADVOCATING

We advocate with Members of Parliament to ensure Australia's justice frameworks address the needs of victims and survivors. We work with partner organisations to promote and share digital campaigns calling for measures to address the exploitation, particularly of workers on farms and in the production of chocolate, garments and coffee.

RAISING AWARENESS

We provide forced marriage and modern slavery education to healthcare workers, educators, family violence workers and marriage celebrants, including a process for victims and survivors to access immediate support.

We hope this calendar gives you a snapshot of the work we do to support the victim/survivors of modern slavery (human trafficking). For more information see our website: acrath.org.au

Since its inception in 2015, the ACRATH calendar has become a beloved fixture in offices, homes, tea rooms and classrooms, thanks to the efforts of Queensland Regional Coordinator Janine Bliss fmm and her team.

These vibrant calendars serve as an invaluable resource, offering a wealth of information on various topics, including:

- Education on modern slavery and human trafficking - Discover how it exists, not only globally, but also right here in Australia, much closer than you may think!
- Important links to raise awareness - From shedding light on the impact of fast fashion and promoting slavery-free chocolate to making your kitchen a slavery-free zone and beyond, these calendars provide essential references for making a positive difference.
- Yearly projects and advocacy work - Find out about the projects and initiatives ACRATH is actively contributing to and join in to make a meaningful impact alongside us.

Part of the proceeds of this calendar will provide income for a project in South East Asia supporting victims of human trafficking.

By fostering widespread community awareness, we can make a difference and spread the message that people are not for sale.

Pre-order now to receive your calendar October 2023.



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