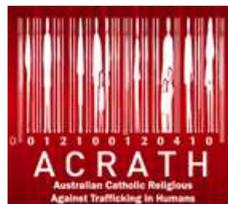


**Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans
Chair's Report to the Annual General Meeting
18 -20 February 2013**



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Acknowledgement of Country

Our conference is being held on the land of the Cadigal people of the Eora nation and as we gather this afternoon we acknowledge the Cadigal people as the traditional custodians of this land. We pay our respect to their traditions and their culture and we invite their spirits to be with us during these days.

Welcome to All

Our gathering this year represents a wide geographical area. Many of us come from Victoria and NSW. We welcome our six members from South Australia, our three members from QLD, our one representative from Canberra, Genny Ryan osu, and our one representative from Northern Territory, Liz Moloney rsm. We are also delighted to welcome Margaret O'Neill rsj and Jacqui Ryan op from New Zealand. We are keen to maintain a strong connection with New Zealand and offer mutual support in our work in fighting this trans national crime of human trafficking. We also welcome Helena Maria Da Costa from the Australian Catholic Migrant and Refugee office in Canberra.

This year we do not have anyone from Western Australia - due to various responsibilities elsewhere - Lucy van Kessel pbvm working at the Presentation Desk in New York for six months, Brianna Lee taking up her scholarship in Thailand and Kathy Fagan managing other commitments. Lucy has been asked to speak to RUN (Religious at the UN) about ACRATH. She reports that the RUN group is well aware of ACRATH and they are impressed with its achievements.

This time last year, as I listened to Louise Cleary's report, I remember being amazed at the volume of work, the commitment of time and the energy generously expended in the name of ACRATH. As I look back over 2012 I feel the same amazement at the breadth of work that has been undertaken. The minutes of meetings, the state reports, the newsletters and the report for the Attorney General's Department all tell stories of energetic and compassionate commitment as ACRATH members around the country affirm the dignity of all and confront this major global human rights violation.

Everybody Matters...

This reflection and the report are set within the framework of the recently published memoir '*Everybody Matters*' by Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 1997-2002. In her memoir Mary Robinson recalls the experiences of a woman who has a deeply felt belief that indeed **everybody does matter**. Her profound respect for the dignity of all is clearly obvious. Her memoir also tells the story of a woman who does not shrink from doing hard things in her efforts to make life better for others and she candidly reveals the pressures and sacrifices of this kind of dedication. One cannot help admire the courage and tenacity of Mary Robinson in her efforts towards achieving human rights for all. Her conviction is that we should always fight for what we believe in and not stop until our voice is heard. Her words are an inspiration to us.

The title of Mary Robinson's book describes who we are as ACRATH - a group for whom the respect for the human rights of **every person** matters. It is a description of the sum of who we are. Our work sits deeply within the framework of Catholic Social Teaching which reminds us:

“When we deal with each other, we should do so with the sense of awe
that arises in the presence of something holy and sacred.
For that is what human beings are: we are created in the image of God (Gn 1:27).”
Economic Justice for All #28

We take a few moments to reflect on the sacredness of the human person and the inspiration from Scripture, Catholic Social Teaching and lived experience that are foundational to our work.

In her book, Mary Robinson quotes Dorothy Thomas, one of the founding directors of Human Rights Watch:

The power of human rights is the idea that all people are born equal in dignity and rights. But it's an idea that doesn't have an enormous army behind it. It's an idea whose effectiveness depends on people themselves believing in it, taking it up and being willing to defend it.

There is ample evidence everywhere that members of ACRATH actively and wholeheartedly believe in the idea of human rights, take it up and are willing to defend it!

I believe one of the gifts of ACRATH is its openness to each member doing what each one can do. For some, their ACRATH involvement may be reading about trafficking and/or attending meetings and taking the work of ACRATH back to their own networks. For others it may involve presentations of workshops, agitating about fair trade and slavery free goods, or research, letter-writing and advocacy; still others might be involved in networking or in accompanying women and men who have been trafficked. The gift of ACRATH is its inclusivity in doing what one can, no matter what that contribution is.

During 2012, ACRATH groups continued to develop in QLD, NSW, VIC, SA and WA, as well as ACT and hopefully, an emerging group in NT. A young women's group has also been formed. We have experienced significant growth in requests for support for trafficked women, and in demand for awareness raising across Australia. Through our association with Bob Kinnaird from the CFMEU National Office we are developing a broader understanding of labour trafficking and the potential for abuse of the 457 Visas.

To capture a glimpse of what is happening around the country I asked each coordinator to name **an activity or achievement** this past year that has given most satisfaction to ACRATH in their state.

WA

Amongst many other activities, including working with the federal police, Lucy Van Kessell pbvm singled out the work of coordinating the Red Cross training on human trafficking. Lucy reports that many organisations were involved and participated. It proved a great opportunity for networking and excellent training for recognising signs of trafficking and knowing what to do to help.

We are also delighted that Brianna Lee, Western Australian ACRATH member, has been selected as one of 20 Australian postgraduate students to receive a 2013 Prime Minister's Asia Award. Brianna is currently undertaking her Ph. D investigating the barriers that victims of human trafficking face in accessing services in Australia. The Award will allow Brianna to broaden the context of her research and deepen her understanding of trafficking in persons through a year-long program of research and cultural immersion. ACRATH looks forward to benefiting from Brianna's experience when she returns to Australia.

SA

Ann Tormey rsm reports that the public meetings held in Port Pirie and Port Augusta with Margaret Ng rsj as presenter, and the fact that Maryellen Thomas rsj, an ACRATH member, has transferred to live in Port Pirie, has led to an interest in having a sub group of ACRATH SA in the Port Pirie Diocese. Their first meeting was held this past week. The Bishop of the Port Pirie Diocese, Greg O'Kelly, is very supportive.

Victoria

Carole McDonald rsm reports that the group in Victoria has been quite stable over a period of some years, therefore all are generally more aware of the issues and thus more readily able to participate in activities - of which there are many!

The formation of a young women's group is exciting. Amongst other activities, they wish to be more involved in researching human trafficking. The group has met fortnightly, often involving long travel on the part of those involved. Into the future ACRATH will be relying on these young people to take initiatives forward. We thank Carol Hogan for beginning this group and for mentoring them along the way.

The work of one of these young women will be shared at this conference. We thank Madelaine Curnow for her comprehensive research report which primarily focuses on human trafficking in Australia and corresponding federal and state responses to the crime.

Another initiative from Victoria is the *Web Based Education Package* for use in schools. Final planning for its implementation is in process and it is hoped it will be rolled out generally to schools after Easter. This has been a major project and we are grateful to all those who have seen the process through to its conclusion.

ACT

In Canberra the activity that gives Genny Ryan the most satisfaction is talking to children about "the chain of supply" and the slavery of other children, often about their age, in the production of the goods that we all expect to have in our daily lives eg chocolate, soccer balls and other sporting equipment. Genny says the children are always utterly silent as if dumbfounded. Then often a little voice will speak up and say "How can we help?" Genny remarks that she is always humbled by their desire to reach out and DO SOMETHING for other children.

QLD

Janine Bliss from QLD reports that twelve months ago there was serious consideration whether a QLD ACRATH group would continue. So their exciting aspect is the re-structuring that has taken place that now sees the group having regular meetings. They have developed a workable volunteer policy and co-ordinator role description, as well as planned practical projects for 2013. They look forward to moving further forward and are exploring having 'cluster groups' which is a slightly different model, but one based on the QLD reality of fewer, active religious in the region. They hope this will be successful in spreading ACRATH throughout the state.

NSW

ACRATH meetings and community network meetings hosted by Anti-Slavery Australia are significant activities. A new initiative for ACRATH meetings included having various people speak about trafficking in Australia and elsewhere and the support systems in place for people trafficked into Australia. Ros Carey from, for one, gave the group a heart-wrenching and disturbing account of her visit to Africa and the work of rehabilitating child soldiers. We also received input from Jenny Stanger, Salvation Army and from Jennifer Burn, Anti-Slavery Australia. The NSW ACRATH group meets every two months and participates in the Anti-Slavery Australia network meetings in alternate months. The network represents both government agencies and NGOs focussing on a range of issues related to human trafficking.

Another significant activity was the workshop with the Ukrainian Church which was a joint activity with Anti-Slavery Australia. Margaret Ng, Noelene Simmons and Jennifer Burn presented an excellent seminar on human trafficking for the Ukrainian Church community.

Noelene Simmons has also become a member of the Stop the Traffik Working Group. This enables all to be kept up to date about chocolate and cotton campaigns in Australia and about global developments with *Stop the Traffik*.

Proceeds of Crime Act Funding (POCA) and Donations

ACRATH continues to be recognised as making a significant contribution to the anti-trafficking agenda in Australia. ACRATH received initial funding from the Attorney General's Department in 2009. This initial funding has been followed by a further three year POCA (Proceeds of Crime Act) funding which began in July 2011. We do not know what the future of this funding will be from July 2014, however we are most appreciative of the present communication and dialogue we have with the Attorney General's Department. It would be very difficult for ACRATH to have its breadth of work without the funding from the government.

The generosity of religious orders, schools and community organisations, matched with the grant from the Attorney General's Department, enables ACRATH to continue responding generously to situations that emerge. I would also like to acknowledge here all the ACRATH members who have worked on projects associated with fundraising.

Canberra Advocacy Visit August 2012

In a note of good wishes for the Canberra Advocacy Visit in August, ACRATH received this reminder: *In the words of Martin Luther King "our lives begin to end the day we become silent on things that matter."* There is no doubt that the fifteen ACRATH members who gathered in Canberra were vocal 'on things that matter' in relation to addressing trafficking in humans. We met with 117 people including Members of Parliament, Ministerial Advisors, Departmental Officers, staff in Embassies and Catholic agencies.

One of our four talking points was to support the new legislation *Crimes Legislation Amendments (Slavery, Slavery-like Conditions and People Trafficking) Bill 2012*. The highlight of the week was to see this Bill passed in the Lower House on Tuesday 21st August. Hansard shows that ACRATH was acknowledged on four occasions prior to the passing of the Bill. ACRATH members were excited as they saw this long-awaited event take place.

The Bill is now soon to be passed in the Senate.

Thank You Catholic Religious Australia and Catholic Dioceses

We thank Catholic Religious Australia for their great support throughout the year. The NSW meetings of ACRATH take place at the CRA office Annandale, an excellent meeting venue. We have been most appreciative of the ready assistance of Sr Veronica McCluskey sgs and Mrs Jane Hawkins over the years and are most grateful to Mr Dinal Jayamanne for his expertise in attending to the financial requirements of the AGD grant. Dinal's professional competence has ensured professional reporting to the Attorney General's Department.

During 2012 ACRATH received more than \$70 000 in donations from religious orders. We are most appreciative of this generosity at a time when there are many calls on the resources of congregations. We are also most grateful for the donations from a number of dioceses around Australia.

We also thank the Brigidine Sisters of the Victorian Province for their generosity in housing the ACRATH office in Kilbride Centre, Albert Park, and for accommodating members of the National Committee when meetings are in Melbourne.

This past year, for the first time, ACRATH helped return to Australia young women taken to their countries of origin for forced marriage. In each situation we called upon members of religious orders to assist in finding places of safety and in assisting in their return to Australia. What a gift we have in our international connections and the trust we have in a generous and compassionate response from religious worldwide.

Thank You Allens, our *pro bono* law firm

ACRATH has continued to work with our pro bono law firm, Allens, to achieve incorporation and Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status. ACRATH realises that achieving incorporation and DGR status will assist in developing long term viability as an organisation. Most importantly it will enable ACRATH to receive tax deductible gifts. We owe a great deal of gratitude to Allens for preparing the Constitution and the DGR application, as it is not an inexpensive venture. I would also like to thank ACRATH's most efficient Treasurer, Shane Wood cfc, who is working with the law firm to bring the Incorporation and the DGR Status to a reality.

ACRATH is celebrating a major milestone with Allens. In early February 2013, Allens steered the fifth trafficked woman through a successful claim at the Victorian Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT). All five women received the maximum allocation for a victim of a serious crime in the State of Victoria. Allens were initially approached by ACRATH for help with this work in January 2010.

Thank you ACRATH Staff Team

The growth and development of ACRATH is in no small part due to the competent and enthusiastic work by our ACRATH workers. We are most grateful to Christine Carolan for her dedicated and tireless work as the National Projects Co-Ordinator, and her attention to the many activities that come with her position. We also thank Noelene Simmons for her initiatives in community education and awareness-raising in NSW and for bringing her expertise to the task of maintaining an up-to-date and vibrant website. After a twelve months presence on Facebook Noelene has noted we have 100 followers. The ACRATH Twitter account is also very active with 175 followers as of 10th February 2013. Both Christine and Noelene contribute untold volunteer hours in addition to their paid work. We are also indebted to Denise Mulcahy fCJ for her days of voluntary service each week that keep our operation running. Denise is meticulous in her work. Amongst many other tasks, Denise's detailed planning and negotiations make the Canberra trips run very smoothly and successfully. A member of our ACRATH staff team for part of this past year was Kathy Fagan; Kathy has been a wonderful networker in WA, enabling ACRATH to get anti human trafficking messages into community organisations. Our newest staff member is Brigid Corcoran; Brigid is working with an ACRATH Victoria working group on the ACRATH RAP, a Radio Awareness Project. Brigid brings excellent community development and design skills to this project. A sincere thank you to each of you Christine, Noelene, Denise, Kathy and Brigid.

Thank you National Committee

Another group whose contribution can never be measured, and who give significant time in voluntary activities, are the members of the National Committee. Thank you to our secretary Carol Hogan SSS who amazes us with her capacity to keep up with the constant correspondence from all and for all - as well as her careful preparation for, and follow up from, meetings. Apart from her secretarial role Carol also does a host of other activities! We also thank Shane Wood for his diligence with the book keeping and his work with Dinal at CRA. Their work ensures, for the rest of us, stress free management of ACRATH's finances. We also value the contribution of Louise Cleary to the National Committee and to ACRATH. As well as knowing the story of ACRATH from its earliest days, Louise is invaluable in keeping ACRATH linked in to global initiatives against trafficking in humans.

A heartfelt thank you to each of the State Coordinators for all you do to keep the state groups active, and for your contributions in so many ways to the national committee: Carole McDonald VIC, Ann Tormey SA, Lucy Van Kessel WA, Janine Bliss QLD, and Sarah Menassa-Rose NSW. Thanks here also to Noelene Simmons who has ably assisted Sarah, during the period surrounding the birth of her second child. Each of you juggles ACRATH work with other responsibilities. Your generosity in time and wisdom is very much appreciated.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the generous advice we receive from Erin Cassell and Will Dunn. As evaluators of our data gathering and report writing for the Attorney General's Department, they have provided us with excellent suggestions and professional frameworks for gathering and presenting our work.

At the end of this first year as ACRATH Chair I want to acknowledge the outstanding work that has brought us to where we are today. What is presented in this report is only a glimpse of what is being done. ACRATH's achievements are no small feat and are the result of hours of dedicated work by many volunteers, coupled with the dedication and hard work of our small part-time workforce. There are challenges ahead, including continued advocacy for better and more compassionate support for people trafficked into Australia, and for young women taken to their countries of origin for forced marriage, understanding more fully the extent of labour trafficking in Australia, continuing the campaign for slave-free goods and negotiating our way through whatever government changes will face us in the future.

All our activities build on ACRATH's strong foundation as we continue to work with compassion and sensitivity to bring justice to those whose rights have been denied through exploitation. We pray for the wisdom, courage and tenacity of Mary Robinson as we find ways, during our conference and afterwards, to nurture in our hearts and in the hearts of others the belief that **everybody matters**.

Maree Marsh csb

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In 2012 ACRATH has expanded across Australia with groups in Qld, NSW, Vic, SA, WA, a young women's group, and an emerging presence in ACT and NT. We have experienced significant growth in requests for support for trafficked women, and in demand for awareness raising across Australia.

Outlined below are ACRATH's three objectives with examples of our work over the past year.

Objective 1: Raise awareness of human trafficking, its causes and the scope for local action by

- developing an online resource for senior secondary students and teachers, piloting - Feb '13
- supporting public events in regional Australia, in Port Pirie, Port Augusta, Geraldton & Kalgoorlie
- presenting at 91 events on human trafficking across Australia
- uploading to our website on average twice per week, and expanding our Facebook presence
- developing radio materials in targeted ethnic languages

Objective 2: Work to ensure that the needs of people trafficked into Australia are met. These include: education and retraining, access to financial compensation, meeting physical needs (medical, dental & other health needs) and pastoral care. We have done this by

- providing pastoral support to twenty-one trafficked women and one man
- identifying supportive emergency housing for trafficked women and advocating for nationally available safe and supportive housing
- working in partnership with Anti-Slavery Australia, Red Cross, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, Josephite Counter Trafficking Project, Stop the Traffik, Project Respect and the Salvation Army to assist in meeting practical needs of people trafficked into Australia
- working with five trafficked women to achieve Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal payments in Victoria, ably supported by our pro bono law firm, Allens
- advocating to ensure trafficked people can access quality English classes

Objective 3: Collaborate with like-minded organisations in Australia, in the Asia Pacific region and internationally to advocate for measures to address human trafficking, by

- campaigning, in a network, to ensure a traffik-free supply chain in the production of chocolate and cotton; our current focus is on ethically sourced Easter chocolate
- asking the federal government to require large Australian companies to ensure a traffik-free supply chain of goods and raw products brought into Australia
- meeting, as an ACRATH delegation of 15, in Canberra in Sept 2012, with 117 MPs, advisors and departmental officials to collegially develop social policy in this area. This is our 7th annual advocacy visit to Canberra
- working with Bob Kinnaird, from the National CFMEU Office, in regards to developing a broader understanding of labour trafficking and abuse of 457 Visas
- supporting, through our global sisters' network, several young women in the Middle East and Africa to return to Australia after they refused to be forced into marriage
- working more effectively globally to ensure the voices of trafficked women are heard, e.g. by supporting a Filipina group to make links with the Special Rapporteur