



This is a very brief submission from ACRATH - Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans.

## 1. Introducing ACRATH - Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans

ACRATH's vision is to work towards the elimination of human trafficking in Australia, the Asia Pacific region, and globally. In our current strategic plan we have four objectives:

**Objective 1: Raise awareness of human trafficking, its causes and the scope for action.** We do this by developing educational resources for schools and for *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD)* communities in Australia. We have a strong website with at least fortnightly uploads, and a social media presence. We encourage all to take action locally and more widely.

**Objective 2: Work to ensure that the rights and complex needs of people trafficked into Australia are met. These needs may include: retraining, employment assistance, access to financial compensation, accompaniment, repatriation assistance, if desired, and meeting medical, dental, psychological & other health needs.** We do this by working with client service NGOs to provide pastoral support to people who have been trafficked. We also campaign to ensure people trafficked into Australia can access their rights.

**Objective 3: Collaborate with like-minded organisations in Australia, in the Asia Pacific region, and globally to advocate for measures to address human trafficking.** We do this by working in networks to ensure slavery-free supply chains of goods such as chocolate, cotton, clothing, seafood. We use the language of addressing the demand for cheap goods produced by trafficked labour, forced labour and child labour. We work in networks to advocate for systemic change to eliminate human trafficking.

**Objective 4: Build a sustainable future for ACRATH.** We do this by developing our archives to preserve the story, by working to achieve financial sustainability for ACRATH and by expanding ACRATH membership into new demographics.

## **2. ACRATH and forced marriage**

ACRATH originally took the issue of forced marriage to the Office for Women about 5 years ago when workers in Catholic refuges described the plight of women who had been brought to Australia to marry someone and who found themselves in need of refuge from their new 'husband'.

ACRATH realised that there were three groupings of young women who fitted into the description of forced marriage:

1. Young women who were brought to Australia to marry, and who discovered when they arrived in Australia that the marriage they found they were entering into was not what they had agreed to.
2. Young women who were taken to the country of origin of their parents to marry against their will.
3. Young women, often citizens or with permanent residency in Australia, who were forced to marry in Australia.

ACRATH made submissions to federal government inquiries on the issue of forced marriage. ACRATH, through our extensive work in schools across Australia, became aware of the need in schools to raise awareness of the March 2013 offense of forced marriage. ACRATH raised this with the federal Attorney General's Department, and was subsequently awarded in mid 2014 a federal government grant to run a pilot scheme raising awareness in school communities of the issue of forced marriage. ACRATH is currently rolling out that pilot scheme in three states, Victoria, NSW and SA, and in Government, Catholic and Independent schools.

## **3. ACRATH Recommendation one: that this Royal Commission into Family Violence includes forced marriage in the definition of family violence**

ACRATH in giving presentations on human trafficking at secondary school and tertiary institutions across Australia, has become keenly aware of the issue of forced marriage. ACRATH is keen to see that the issue is addressed within the family violence sector. We have learned from the family violence sector because of this sector's vast experience in victim/survivor care, community education and development of resources.

And yet our experience is that forced marriage is little understood in Australia. And often it is not seen as an aspect of family violence. We call on this Royal Commission to address this shortcoming and to ensure that in Australia forced marriage is from now on seen as an aspect of our national work to address family violence.

#### **4. ACRATH Recommendation two: that this Royal Commission into Family Violence recognises the pressing need for community education on the issue of forced marriage**

As we have explained above ACRATH has extensive experience across Australia in giving counter trafficking presentations to young people in both secondary and tertiary institutions over the past 10 years. Our engagement with young people tells us that there is a great deal of ignorance about the issues of forced marriage, about the difference between forced and arranged marriages, about the human rights of all people with regard to marriage, and about supports that are available to people, mostly girls and young women, who are facing forced marriage.

ACRATH has on several occasions heard of a girl or young woman who is facing a forced marriage and has turned to someone who might be expected to help them (a teacher, a member of the police force, a medico); ACRATH is dismayed that on several occasions appropriate assistance has not been forthcoming, often because the potentially helpful person did not know the law and the available supports. We call on this Royal Commission to address this shortcoming and ensure that the need for appropriate community education is addressed.

Thank you for this opportunity to raise these recommendations.

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