

2 April 2020

Dear Friends,

We are living in extraordinary times, witnessing great hardship as well as many compassionate and creative responses. As the global COVID-19 pandemic worsens, ACRATH staff and Members are conscious of those most vulnerable to human traffickers.

We want to let you know that your great encouragement and support means that we can continue working through this crisis. We are doing things a little differently, but achieving good outcomes and we want to share a couple with you.

1. ACRATH has been approached for support for a number of individuals experiencing trafficking right now. As we have come to expect, our mostly-volunteer based team has rallied, building on the critical networks we have developed. Several of these requests for help are leading to advocacy for systemic change. Two very vulnerable groups are women who came to Australia to work in prostitution, and seasonal workers who have little or no income and are in danger of becoming homeless. We are in a network promoting an urgent advocacy initiative to ensure these people are safe and housed. ACRATH has also found that young people, especially girls and young women, facing a forced marriage are extremely vulnerable in this current COVID-19 context.
2. Our Companionship Program has come up with ways to continue supporting trafficked women and their children in Australia despite the fact that ACRATH companions can't meet face-to-face with those women whom they are supporting. They are phoning and texting the women to support them in any way they can.
3. We are working with school teachers nationally to find ways of offering on-line education resources so teachers and students feel supported as they explore the challenges of online learning; we plan that our quality online human trafficking education resources can be put to good use.
4. ACRATH's contribution to the UN Review of Australia's human rights track record, called a Universal Periodic Review, is currently being developed.
5. ACRATH's slavery-free Easter chocolate information, **The Sweet and often Bitter truth about Easter Chocolate**, is being circulated. It is available at <https://acrath.org.au/take-action/slavery-free-easter/>
6. We launched a letter-writing campaign seeking compensation for 22 men from Vanuatu, forced into labour in Queensland in 2014 for several months. The men, who came to Australia under the Federal Government's Seasonal Workers Program, are owed more than \$77,000.
7. And of course as we all face such big challenges, we are trying to stay in touch with our own volunteers, companions, members, supporters and staff to ensure people are doing okay.

We can only continue this work because of your support, so again, thank you.

Peace in challenging times



Christine Carolan, ACRATH Executive Officer



Louise Cleary csb, ACRATH President

Dear ACRATH Members and Supporters

INFORMATION & CAMPAIGNS

- A. **ACRATH Newsletter, March 2020**
<https://acrath.org.au/acrath-newsletter-march-2020/>
- B. **The boys from Tanna who were stolen from their island home**
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-02-21/blackbirding-legacy-haunts-tanna-vanuatu/11764586>
- C. **Australia's Blackbirding trade: How Pacific Islanders were lured to work, Patricia Karvelas on RN Drive**
<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/drive/how-pacific-islanders-were-lured-to-work/11986098>
- D. **New film documents tragedy of human trafficking by presenting 'Wells of Hope'**
<https://www.globalsistersreport.org/news/arts-and-media/news/new-film-documents-tragedy-human-trafficking-presenting-wells-hope>
- E. **Children in the Democratic Republic of Congo mine for coltan to supply smartphone industry**
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-03-01/tech-companies-rely-child-labour-abuse-to-mine-coltan-in-congo/11855258>
- F. **New Zealand-based Samoan chief found guilty of human trafficking and slavery**
<https://www.freedomunited.org/news/new-zealand-samoan-chief-found-guilty-of-human-trafficking-and-slavery/>
- G. **Nigerian child domestic slavery exposed in new novel**
<https://www.freedomunited.org/news/nigerian-domestic-slavery-exposed-in-new-novel/>
- H. **Murky Waters**
<https://cdn.minderoo.org/content/uploads/2020/03/04091414/Walk-Free-Foundation-Pacific-Report-03-2020.pdf>
- I. **And from Christine Carolan, ACRATH NEO**
Things feels tough to me at the moment ... at least until I consider the situation of an overseas worker here on a temporary visa. Our ACRATH forced labour team are uncovering major needs for accommodation, food and healthcare for Pacific Islanders and people from Timor Leste as they work here in agriculture and at abattoirs. Where is their COVID-19 safety net? Please sign this petition.
Australian Unions: Coronavirus - A guaranteed wage subsidy to save jobs now!
<https://www.megaphone.org.au/petitions/coronavirus-wage-subsidies-now>
- J. **The rights and health of refugees, migrants and stateless must be protected in COVID-19 response**
<https://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/3/5e836f164/rights-health-refugees-migrants-stateless-must-protected-covid-19-response.html>
- K. **'Left with nothing': Australia's migrant workforce face destitution without coronavirus safety net**
<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2020/apr/01/left-with-nothing-australias-migrant-workforce-face-destitution-without-coronavirus-safety-net>
- L. **Way of the Cross Meditation, 2019**
http://w2.vatican.va/news_services/liturgy/documents/index_via-crucis_en.html

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Kind Regards
Carmel

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