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**Australian Catholic Religious
Against Trafficking in Humans**

News Release ... July 24 2020

People More Vulnerable to Traffickers during Covid-19

ACRATH calls for support in lead up to World Day Against Trafficking in Persons on 30 July

ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans) today urged people to support those most vulnerable to trafficking during the COVID-19 pandemic.

ACRATH President Sr Louise Cleary csb, who co-founded the organisation 15 years ago, urged people to support this often 'invisible' group of people by donating to ACRATH's fundraising campaign in the lead up to World Day Against Trafficking in Persons on 30 July. [Sr Louise also invited people to join in prayer via zoom \(details below\) on July 30.](#)

"Hundreds of thousands of people are being drawn to the promise of work simply to put food on their family's table - work that often turns out to be a job in slave-like conditions. Or worse, they are coerced into labour or sexual exploitation, as our overseas partners tell us," she said.

Sr Louise said COVID-19 is impacting on the very people most vulnerable to trafficking because they often live in poverty, lack suitable housing and healthcare, or can't access support services. It is a great concern to ACRATH that some people in Australia, including young women at risk of a forced marriage and some overseas workers, are also vulnerable.

ACRATH has focused on supporting trafficked people during COVID-19 by:

- Developing, in response to COVID-19, a 35-minute forced marriage online training video for teachers, hospital staff and child-protection workers, who cannot attend face-to-face training sessions but who could be required to provide safe referral pathways for a young woman in a forced marriage or facing a forced marriage. In 2019 the Australian Federal Police had 93 active cases of forced marriage.
- Supporting ACRATH Companions to assist trafficked women and their children during COVID-19. These volunteers have used online technology to help the women with practical issues such as material aid and bill paying as well as providing more complex emotional support.
- Offering teachers from around Australia a series of webinars on human trafficking using our online kit, *Modern Slavery: A Kit for Senior Secondary Students*. The webinars were developed to support teachers forced to work online during COVID-19 and more are planned for later this year and next year.

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- Supporting Western Australia ACRATH members to develop posters for distribution to all Catholic schools and parishes in WA to promote slavery-free supply chains and support for garment workers in those countries hit hardest by COVID-19.
- Connecting our forced labour team with vulnerable workers from the Pacific and Timor Leste who are working in Victoria and in Queensland; these workers often find themselves unable to return home because of the pandemic; we try to keep them updated on the COVID-19 regulations from the government and other important health information and support services.

ACRATH's Executive Officer Christine Carolan said each year ACRATH, which receives no government funding, asks for support to develop projects, services and resources.

"It takes an almighty community effort to build the momentum needed to stop modern slavery so we all need to link arms and for each of us to do our bit. We know these are difficult times for many people but we need support to keep going; the people who were vulnerable to trafficking before the pandemic are now super-vulnerable," Ms Carolan said.

"We are grateful to the many people who have supported trafficked people by supporting ACRATH in the past; please donate now if you can."

[Join in zoom prayer on July 30](#)

ACRATH members have prepared a ten-minute Prayer for the World Day Against the Trafficking in Persons on July 30 and we invite you to attend with us on ZOOM. Please click on the link below to attend. If you are unable to attend the zoom prayer gathering please use the material on our website (acrath.org.au) and lead your community in prayer.

Zoom details

Topic: World day Against Trafficking in Persons

Time: Jul 30, 2020 12:00 PM Canberra, Melbourne, Sydney

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83965877041>

Meeting ID: 839 6587 7041

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