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**Australian Catholic Religious
Against Trafficking in Humans**

News release --- Tuesday August 18 2020

ACRATH launches major forced marriage training initiative

ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans) will launch a suite of new and revised forced marriage resources during a zoom launch on Thursday August 27 2020. A highlight of the zoom launch will be the release of the 35-minute **2020 ACRATH Recorded Forced Marriage Video Presentation** for educators, healthcare professionals and frontline responders including child protection workers, followed by a Q & A involving Australian Federal Police.

The **2020 ACRATH Recorded Forced Marriage Video Presentation** has been developed for awareness raising, education and training. It outlines appropriate support for those in, or at risk of, forced marriage and for forced marriage survivors. Importantly, the video also provides a consistent set of safe referral pathways.

Join the zoom at 2pm on August 27 2020 at:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89751808956?pwd=NWtsby9GV2E0aW42a2tlcjc0OG5cQT09>

Meeting ID: 897 5180 8956

OR go to:

<https://acrath.org.au/forced-marriage-training-initiative/>

The forced marriage video explores the complexities of forced marriage, the impact on a victim of forced marriage, the extent of the problem in Australia and globally, and referral pathways for victim/survivors.

It is a compelling tool for those working to combat forced marriage and provides some disturbing information about forced marriage in Australia. During the 2019/20 financial year, the AFP received 92 reports of forced marriage, with just over half of these relating to victims under the age of 18 years. 70% of the reports alleged that victims were taken offshore or the intent was for them to travel offshore for the purpose of forced marriage. The most vulnerable group seen by the AFP during this period was young females between the ages of 15 and 19 years.

Liz Payne, who developed the forced marriage resources, spent over five years with ACRATH building networks across Australia with her ACRATH colleagues, educating Australian secondary school teachers, front-line workers and developing resources. She has brought all her knowledge and collaborations together in the free-to-access **2020 ACRATH Recorded Forced Marriage Video Presentation**. The video, produced in collaboration with Liz's brother Matt James, a professional Corporate Education Specialist and videographer, will be available on the ACRATH website from August 27 2020.

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Supporting resources developed specifically for educators, marriage celebrants and clergy, midwives, nurses and other healthcare professionals, and for front-line professionals, including child protection workers, will accompany the video presentation.

As part of the zoom launch Marilyn Ross, of the Australian Federal Police, will speak about Australia's laws around forced marriage and she will participate in a Q & A.

"It's so important that health workers, midwives, child protection workers and teachers know the right referral pathways for a person who discloses a forced marriage or an imminent forced marriage," Liz said.

"Without knowing the correct way to respond to someone, that person can be left very vulnerable and their safety jeopardised. And we know that even though the AFP was investigating almost 100 cases last year, there are so many more that will never be reported because of fear of retribution, or of the concern that the victim has in relation to the shame that will be brought upon the family within their community. In fact, the Institute of Criminology estimates that for every victim of human trafficking and modern slavery detected in Australia, there are another four that go undetected. As forced marriage is recognised under Australian law as a slavery-like practice, these statistics are sobering!"

Liz said the last five years has seen great collaboration between agencies and organisations such as the AFP and ACRATH, Red Cross and Anti-Slavery Australia. She said the recent development of the Forced Marriage Network in Western Australia was a testimony to this collaboration where great work was being done by WA ACRATH and colleague organisations to train teachers and front-line workers.

"ACRATH has developed amazing education and awareness raising resources and we are skilled advocates and educators ourselves. By working closely with the AFP and other key organisations, we can take a more holistic approach to the issue and ensure that victims of forced marriage are kept safe, and that laws and policies are developed to protect them," Liz said.

Liz said the development of the video and supporting material was prompted by the COVID19 pandemic. She said requests for training for child protection workers could not be delivered face-to-face in some states, but an online resource could be used.

The **2020 ACRATH-Developed Forced Marriage Presentation** is not recommended for use with school-aged students; it has specifically been developed for workplace professionals.

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