Attorney General Hears ACAN Reflection

7 March 2023 - The Australian Catholic Anti-slavery Network (ACAN) was represented at an event convened by the Attorney-General, the Hon Mark Dreyfus KC MP yesterday to mark the 10th anniversary of royal assent of the Crimes Legislation Amendment (Slavery, Slavery-like Conditions and People Trafficking) Bill. The significance of the Bill included inserting forced marriage, forced labour and organ trafficking offences in the *Criminal Code Act 1995*. The legislation also amended existing definitions to capture a range of slavery-like exploitative practices and forms of coercion. ACAN Program Manager, Jenny Stanger, was invited to share a reflection as a civil society member of the National Roundtable on People Trafficking and Slavery and advocate for the legal reforms.

"These new laws made clear there is no place for modern slavery in Australia and empowered law enforcement agencies to disrupt, investigate and prosecute these crimes,' said Attorney General Dreyfus.

In December 2022 the Attorney General announced a targeted review of the modern slavery offences in the Criminal Code to ensure Australia's criminal justice frameworks are effective and up to date. The consultations closed yesterday, following three months of productive engagement with the public.

Ms Stanger notes that, "In nearly 20 years, only 31 people have been prosecuted for modern slavery crimes in Australia. The Criminal Code has hardly been tested in court and there has never been a prosecution related to forced labour in the supply chains of a business. There will be little effect of the review if the Migration Act, also under review, does not address key barriers to migrants reporting abuse. Addressing modern slavery requires a holistic response that recognises the intersectionality of other policy areas with criminal justice."

The Albanese Government also announced $2.7 million in further grants funding for organisations to prevent modern slavery crimes and support victims.