

ACRATH PRESS RELEASE

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Australians join global struggle against human trafficking

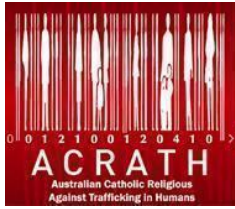


Pictured: The delegation from Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji (including ACRATH Members) represented Talitha Kum General Assembly in Rome last week with Chiara Porro, Australian Ambassador to the Holy See

A delegation of women involved in anti-trafficking in Oceania, including ACRATH members in Australia, joined about 140 others at the *Talitha Kum General Assembly in Rome to forge a five-year plan to combat modern slavery.

Participants acknowledged 'the world has changed dramatically in the past five years'. They discussed the contribution of impact of war and climate change as a push factor on people leaving their home countries, including those seeking seasonal work in Australia.

Annette Arnold rsj, Talitha Kum Oceania Regional Coordinator and ACRATH board member, said one of the Assembly's three Final Declaration priorities for the next five years was to ensure organisations are "intentionally survivor-centred, survivor-informed, and trauma-sensitive – listening to their stories, consulting them in decision-making processes and putting them at the heart of our networks". She said putting survivors at the heart of our networks was challenging, but "a call that we need to keep reflecting on using Conversations in the Spirit".



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The General Assembly, attended by 153 delegates from 71 countries, committed to three priorities for 2025-2030, which were discerned using the synodal method of Conversation in the Spirit. They are:

Priority 1. Systemic change in the face of new vulnerabilities

Priority 2. Holistic, survivor-centred approach

Priority 3. Broadening collaboration and partnerships

A detailed outline of each priority can be found [here](#).

Several ACRATH members, from Oceania, spoke at the General Assembly focussing on ACRATH's Companionship Program, seasonal workers and supply chains.

Ms Marguerite Buckley, a Victorian ACRATH member, spoke about the support of 40 victim/survivors and their 45 children supported through ACRATH's Companionship Program. She said the Companionship Program was part of ACRATH's focus of maintaining "a deep respect for the dignity and uniqueness of each person" and to assist survivors as they continue to lead their own healing and take charge of their lives. Marguerite said many survivors faced years of challenges in many facets of their lives including employment, health, education, finance, housing, visas and relationships. Companions offer support as survivors work to rebuild their lives.

Ms Isabel Salter, a member of ACRATH in SA and Oceania Talitha Kum Youth Delegate currently in New York undertaking a 10-month internship with Mercy Global Action, presented on supply chains and was also a member of the youth panel.

Annette Arnold rsj, an ACRATH board member, said AI technology was an emerging issues and anti-trafficking organisations around the world, are concerned about the potential impact AI could have on those vulnerable to human trafficking.

Maureen Delaney, Regional ACRATH Coordinator for WA, who was also part of the 10-strong Oceania delegation, said forced migration was another great threat, with an estimated 110 million people displaced in 2023.

"Climate change is forcing people to migrate or become displaced in their own country. Half of the world's refugees are children who are so vulnerable to exploitation," Maureen said.

Throughout the delegation the stories from survivors of human trafficking were shared, giving delegates an intimate glimpse of the impact on a person's life. Maureen said a highlight of the delegation was "engaging at the grassroots with people all over the world who share the concerns of the heinous crime of human trafficking".





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“The Assembly provided the opportunity to hear the grassroots stories of exploitation and abuse along with the creative, influential, effective and generous responses being made by those involved in this ministry. The global network witnesses to the power for good that happens when people collaborate to combat such evil in our world. The deep listening, synodal process used prior to and at the Assembly, has been great in being able to name clear directions for the next five years,” Annette said.

“In Oceania we have ongoing opportunities to collaborate, particularly around the impacts the climate crisis has on migration and forced labour.”

During the Assembly, at a Sisters Anti-Trafficking Awards event, Annette also met Sr Jane from the Hilton Foundation; the Foundation has begun to fund some of ACRATH's core work where sisters and their lay partners support victims and survivors, raise awareness, and advocate for change.



*Talitha Kum: Formally established in 2009 with the [International Union of Superiors General](#) (UISG) as an international initiative against human trafficking and exploitation, Talitha Kum promotes collaboration among **networks** organized at national, regional and continental level, actively supporting victims, survivors and people at risk.

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