

ACRATH

**Australian Catholic Religious
Against Trafficking in Humans**

ACRATH Annual Conference 2018

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In recent weeks Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking In Humans (ACRATH) held its annual conference bringing together religious and their colleagues to discuss, hear from speakers and plan the next action.

Forced marriage may seem an alien concept to most Australians, yet, when surveyed, many women's refugees reported numbers up to 50% of women fleeing such marriages. Forced marriages occur in a number of ethnic groups and, although the issue requires cultural sensitivity, it is never acceptable. Australia has legislation prohibiting forced marriage but there is an acute need for community education, especially for teachers, GPs and police, so they may be able to identify the signs and assist the victims. Material has been developed for schools by Anti-Slavery Australia (My Blue Sky – my future).



There was much discussion regarding the exploitation of workers, particularly when it comes to the supply of goods – cheap clothes from Bangladesh, sports equipment made by the nimble fingers of Indian children and chocolate from enslaved labourers in the cocoa fields. Considerable success has been achieved in persuading a number of companies to produce and sell Fair Trade chocolate (Mars, Nestle, Haig's..), some success in the provision of sports equipment (Etiko and Jinta) and a growing awareness of Fair Wear, helped by

Baptist World Aid's Ethical Fashion Guide – Zara and Etiko are at the top of the list.

Speakers from St Vincent's Health and Salvation Army outlined the services they provide for trafficked women and the training given so that victims presenting to casualty or refuges can be recognised, counselled and supported. A Columban priest, with 20 years' experience supporting workers in Taiwan, gave insights into what the Church can achieve when its efforts combine both practical support and advocacy. But the stand out speaker was a young woman from Konica Minolta demonstrating just what an ethical company can do when it focuses on continuing consultation with suppliers, a requirement that they in turn investigate their own supply chains and an expectation that any improvement requires a genuine partnership and shared values.

