

Ring of Fire – Australia November 2008

Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans (ACRATH)

In September this year ACRATH members, including eleven women religious and colleagues, spent a week in Canberra, the national capital, lobbying Australian Federal Parliamentarians on issues of human trafficking. ACRATH represents 180 religious orders in Australia working to eliminate human trafficking locally, in the Asia Pacific region and internationally. Sr Janet Palafox ibvm was actively involved in the lobbying, meeting with 61 members of parliament.



The aim of the ACRATH group's visit to Canberra was to lobby for changes to the visa regulations applied to people who are trafficked and to ensure that adequate services are provided once a person has been recognised as trafficked. The group asked that visas allocated to people trafficked into Australia be on the basis of their human rights and not on their willingness to assist with prosecutions. ACRATH called for an amnesty for people trafficked into Australia, now living here illegally, and sought assurances that the Federal Government's tender to provide services for trafficked people is administered in such a way that it provides for each person's needs.

Following the ACRATH group's visit human trafficking was debated in the House of Representatives of the Australian Parliament. Speakers in support of the motion included members of various parties

(Australian Labor Party, Nationals, and Liberal) with some speakers referring specifically to ACRATH.

Weeks later, ACRATH was surprised, but encouraged after the Minister for Home Affairs, Bob Debus, announced the allocation of \$1 million to assist four Australian non-government organisations (NGOs) in their efforts to combat people trafficking. The Anti-

Slavery Project, Project Respect, the Scarlet Alliance and ACRATH will each receive \$250,000 to provide vital outreach for trafficking victims and conduct education and awareness initiatives on people trafficking. The funding is provided from confiscated criminal assets under the Proceeds of Crime Act.

The Government press release said, "It's time to recognise the tireless efforts of these NGOs in the protection of victims of people trafficking and in raising awareness of the crime in the broader community. It's fortunate that the number of trafficking victims in Australia remains low, but we must remain vigilant. NGOs have been making a valuable contribution and have lobbied hard for victims. This funding recognises the important work they do along with a number of Government agencies in developing Australia's anti-trafficking strategy."

The first National Roundtable on People Trafficking brought together, for the first time, more than 20 Government agencies and NGOs. The Government will also approach legal education and training bodies, such as the National Judicial College, for assistance in developing resources to assist judges, prosecutors and jurors. This is a significant move on the part of the Government to address the scourge of trafficking in human beings.

Reading Recovery

In response to an invitation from Bishop John Jobst the Loreto Sisters went to the Kimberley region of Western Australia in 1973 to administer and staff St Mary's School, Broome. The Sisters taught in the Kimberley for twenty five years, first in Broome and then in the more remote communities of Lombadina and Kalumburu, they left the Kimberley in 1998.



While the Loreto Sisters are no longer able in the Kimberley, they carry in their hearts the needs of the children. Julianne Maxwell, a niece of Sr Mary Roarty ibvm, who spent many years in the Kimberley, sought the help of the Loreto Sisters in responding to the needs of Indigenous children which would continue the work begun by her aunt. She also wanted to retain a Loreto connection with the people of the Kimberley. After much consultation supporting the READING RECOVERY PROGRAM has emerged as one way to do this.

The Reading Recovery Program is an early intervention program with a systematic approach to overcoming literacy issues with proven outcomes in countries such as New Zealand, Brazil, Britain and Australia. Reading Recovery provides one-on-one tutoring for each student identified as having difficulty with reading and writing. The program requires a tutor to mentor and train teachers in Reading Recovery principles.

Reading Recovery has been operating in some Catholic Schools in the Kimberley since 2006.

Currently the reading Recovery Program is funded by contributions from 6 participating schools in the Kimberley, (Broome, Lombadina, Kununarra, Derby, Wyndham and Beagle Bay) and operates from St Mary's Broome.

The Reading Recovery program has proved over a two year period to be successful for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Kimberley children who have struggled with literacy. Based on a 2007 report by Janet Scull and Trish Bremner (Reading Recovery in the Kimberley), the program has shown to have a positive impact in the literacy teaching in the Kimberley. A wider implementation of this program could assist students most at risk, of achieving educational success.

The Loreto Sisters, through Mary Ward International Australia, and with the generous support of Julianne and the Roarty family, are able to support the continuation of Reading Recovery in the 6 schools for the next three years.

In addition, MWIA, in partnership with a number of organisations including the CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE WA and the KIMBERLEY LAND COUNCIL, is working to extend this programme to all schools in the Kimberley. To achieve this various government agencies and corporations have been approached for funding. MWIA hopes that, with the support of other Loreto network partners, students in the Kimberley will be able to access the Reading Recovery Program.



