

The Fight Against Slavery and Human Trafficking

By Sr Anne Powell rc

Human trafficking is an open wound on the body of contemporary society, a scourge upon the body of Christ.

Pope Francis, 10 April 2014.

The situation

Human trafficking is now the second most significant organised type of crime globally, with an estimated 'income' of \$150 billion annually. The Asia-Pacific region is host, sadly, to the largest number of trafficked and exploited persons in the world.

Many people travel willingly to New Zealand in search of a better life for their families. However, there is a lot of exploitation in migrant communities. People can be deceived by the promise of residency and are often prepared to do anything so that they and their families might have better lives. 'Promises' of

residency, citizenship or jobs usually involve the person being coerced or deceived into paying large sums of money to obtain the residency, or the promise of a job which turns out to be either non-existent, or for very low wages, or for no wages at all.

Such forms of coercion or deception result in the serious undermining of the victims' personal freedom and ability to make choices for themselves.

Trends in exploitation

In New Zealand, as in Australia, labour exploitation is a growing trend, particularly in the hospitality, agriculture and horticulture industries. Victims are afraid to go to the authorities and express their concerns for fear of making matters worse, as the offending person or community can be very intimidating. Notwithstanding, there have been some successful prosecutions of offenders, and victims have been supported through the process and beyond in practical and compassionate ways.

Key signs of trafficking

Key indicators that someone is being exploited include: persons being forced to remain in the situation in which they find themselves; identity documents have been taken from them; their working days / hours are excessive; they receive little or no pay; their living and working conditions are inhumane and / or degrading; they are

subject to threats or experience psychological or physical violence.

ANZRATH

Aotearoa New Zealand Religious Against Trafficking of Humans is a group of religious and friends throughout New Zealand. The group works to increase awareness of exploitation and trafficking as a growing reality in our country.

ACRATH

Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans, among other objectives, networks "for systemic change to eliminate trafficking and ensure slavery-free supply chains of goods," and "collaborates with like-minded organisations to address human trafficking across the Asia-Pacific region."

In Australia:

If you have serious and genuine concerns about possible victims of trafficking and / or exploitation, contact the Federal Police, phone 131AFP (131237) or email AOCC-Client-Liaison@afp.gov.au

In New Zealand:

If you have serious and genuine concerns about possible victims of trafficking and / or exploitation, contact NZ Police, or Crimestoppers, on 0800 555 111 or <https://www.crimestoppers-nz.org>



The crew of this Korean fishing boat, chartered by a New Zealand company, walked off amid claims of assault, sexual assault and unpaid wages in 2011



Mr Peter Devoy, Assistant General Manager for Compliance and Border Operations at Immigration NZ, Sr Anne Powell rc, Dr Rebecca Miller, Programme Manager - People Smuggling and Trafficking in Persons at Immigration NZ, at Modern Slavery meeting organised by ANZRATH, September 2017