



Diocesan e-News

YOUNG PEOPLE IN SOCIAL JUSTICE

On July 27, 2018 young people from secondary schools around the diocese attended the Catholic Schools Youth Festival at Federation University. The Festival was facilitated by the Catholic Education Office Religious Education team and engaged students from Damascus College Ballarat, Marian College Ararat, St Mary MacKillop College Swan Hill, Loreto College Ballarat, St Patricks College Ballarat and St Brigid's College Horsham.

Many students attended a Social Justice workshop designed to inform and empower youth to name and plan an action. Youths researched organisations including ACRATH (Australian Catholic Religious Against Trafficking in Humans), Vinnies, Soup Bus, Caritas, Catholic Earthcare and Clean Up Australia. They then contributed to shared googledocs listing their intended projects and actions.



With their investigation of AGRATH and finding out that slavery exists here in Australia, the young people expressed feelings of shock and surprise. They were unaware that human trafficking, forced labour and slavery is happening right here in our backyard and up until this time had believed that modern slavery only occurred overseas.

This perception is alarming given that the human trafficking industry is worth \$150 billion annually and is second only to the drug trade (John McCarthy QC). Human beings are seen as a commodity and even human organs are trafficked for the right price.

Some may say what can we do about it? Well, there's a lot we can do, if we choose to. With the Catholic Church being the largest non-government organisation in the world with approximately 6.5 million Catholics and around 800,000 students enrolled in Catholic schools in Australia, there's a lot we can do. ACRATH are an organisation who can help us to take action and right now they are experiencing challenging times, having just been given a major funding cut. To find out more about the modern slavery bill, human trafficking and antislavery in Australia, go to www.acrath.org.au



*Rachel Smith
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