

Presentation for the consultation, 'Set my People Free'.

Kiaora koutou, I bring you greetings from our primates the Most Revd Phillip Richardson and the Most Revd Don Tamihere of the Anglican Church of Aotearoa, New Zealand/ Polynesia. I also bring you greetings From Bishop Justin Duckworth from the Anglican Diocese of Wellington where I serve as deacon for social justice.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address this important consultation on people trafficking and our role as a church in addressing this issue. To begin I will briefly outline some of the steps being taken to combat this crime within the New Zealand context and beyond, beginning in 2018.

In September 2018, the Governments of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States jointly launched the Principles to Guide Government Action to Combat Human Trafficking in Global Supply Chains. The principles were aimed at, addressing human trafficking in supply chains and advancing responsible recruitment policies and practices.

New Zealand has also ratified a range of international legal instruments which place obligations on us to take action in relation to women and children, who are internationally recognised as being disproportionately affected by modern slavery.

New Zealand is also an active member of the Bali Process.

In 2021, during the conference, held in Parliament, and organised by our Diocese, the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), and the US Embassy, the new Plan of Action against Forced Labour, People Trafficking and Slavery was launched the plan has a five year role out.

Within his opening remarks The Hon Michael Wood, Minister for Immigration stated that,

“Partnership is fundamental to successfully achieving the aims of this plan and includes government, unions, businesses, civil society organisations and international partners. We must also recognise the role that all of us can play in reducing forced labour, people trafficking and slavery both in New Zealand and internationally.

We can influence practices through our purchase of goods and services here and abroad, and we can learn about the indicators of modern slavery to identify potential victims. Every action and change we make to stamp out exploitation makes a difference. It was a conversation at a church between a worker and a member of the public that ultimately led to New Zealand’s first people trafficking conviction.

Now more than ever we must be aware of the risks of modern slavery occurring in New Zealand, and be prepared to take the actions necessary to prevent these practices, protect victims and enforce the law.

This Plan of Action continues our collective efforts to ensure that people are not exploited, either in New Zealand or overseas. We will continue to work together here in New Zealand, and with our international partners, to eliminate forced labour, people trafficking and slavery”.

In the past couple of years New Zealand has put in place a number of new measures including,

A new visa to support migrants to leave exploitative situations quickly and remain lawfully in New Zealand. This visa will be valid for up to six months.

A new dedicated 0800 number and web form to make it easier to report migrant worker exploitation. The primary focus of these new initiatives is

to make it easier for migrant workers to report exploitation and ensure migrants are able to leave exploitative situations as quickly as possible.

MBIE has also made good progress in the roll out of people trafficking training to government staff with the focus of these sessions focussed on a trauma informed approach. Presently Immigration NZ has been developing an awareness raising brochure for the government and community, which is due to be released this year. The New Zealand Government has also made a commitment to consider introducing modern slavery legislation to address exploitation in supply chains. It is likely this legislation will be introduced this year.

Moving to now widen the focus of my presentation, it has been said that ***“trafficking happens where need meets greed.”***

A 2019 article in the Foreign Policy magazine stated, *“The coerced movement of people across borders is as old as the laws of supply and demand. What is new is the volume of the traffic -- and the realization that we have done little to stem the tide. We must look beyond our raw emotions if we are ever to stop those who trade in human lives”.ⁱ*

Looking beyond our emotions entails coming to grips with the reality that despite a universally accepted definition of what people trafficking is, with a raft of countries adopting such a protocol, plus billions of dollars purportedly being spent on raising awareness, the fact is that the exploitation of people continues to grow, with no country being immune.

Forget for a moment the Hollywood film version of people trafficking and exploitation, and take a look instead within your home, your office, what you eat and what you wear. Reflect as well on the restaurant you are heading to for a meal. Then broaden the lens towards the hospitality and

construction industries as well as the horticulture, viticulture and fishing industries.

In 2021, after a complex joint investigation by Immigration New Zealand and the New Zealand Police, Joseph Matamata, a Samoan matai, a chief, was found guilty of 13 slavery charges and 10 of human trafficking and sentenced to 11 years in prison. The 25 page court document read at the sentencing makes for a harrowing read, especially when looking at the youngest of his victims. Here is snapshot of what was said,

‘The youngest three victims were aged between 12 and 19 years. You adopted these victims, so no visas were required for them. You were able to exercise parental control over them. You told the victims’ parents they would come to New Zealand for a better future – to work and send money home. This would assist their families. You knew they would not be paid for their labour. In relation to the slavery convictions, the same controls were in place for these three. You retained the victims’ passport and bank cards. You restricted their movement and communication. They worked long hours in the orchards and then completed household chores. Again, you controlled them by actual or threatened violence.

What I struggled with as I studied the document was that for over the 2 decades of offending all the victims were regularly attending church, yet their plight appears to have gone unnoticed by the parishioners and church leaders.

This one case highlights the reality that, as with many cases, the act of trafficking begins after the movement of a person/people from one place to another. How then do we begin to address the complexity of issues that cause people to uproot from their homelands? It is a question of connecting up the dots – dots which may significantly contribute to the growth in the

exploitation of people; such dots as, civil unrest and violence, marginalisation, gender discrimination and rampant consumerism. Then there is the detrimental impact on vulnerable populations being caused by climate change and the damaging effects of globalisation on poorer countries. Last but not least we frequently see on news media the heart-breaking human cost of increasingly 'closed migration doors'.

Whilst the presenting issue in our country is the immediate exploitation of migrant workers within New Zealand, we are aware there are underpinning factors which also need addressing longer term; otherwise we are simply applying a temporary band aid. There is, for example, still much work to be done to address the chain of events, and the players involved, in the recruitment process from country of origin to the country of destination.

Globalisation has seen heightened economic competition and considerable pressures to meet consumer 'just in time' supply demands which in turn has driven down wages. A global push for cheap labour is seeing an ongoing increase in the need for migrant workers, especially for the 3 D jobs (dirty, degrading and dangerous) which national workers won't fill. A chilling observation was made in relation to migrant workers and the driving down of costs, - ***'Ensuring that economic activity remains competitive in global markets requires that this labour supply be cheap and docile'***.¹

There is now though a growing consensus among both grass roots practitioners and researchers that we are well overdue to begin gathering further empirical evidence in order to gain a greater understanding of the

¹ <http://www.europaforum.or.at/site/HomepageMetropolis2003/en/WS2.5Taran.pdf>

connections. For example climate change contributes, and in some instances exacerbates, situations of conflict. Such conflict can intensify incidents of trafficking and exploitation as people are forced to flee from the twin threats of starvation and violence.

Integral to all this though is the importance of listening and learning from those most affected. Last year I attended an online discussion which focussed on how gender inequality and modern slavery intersect, and how we can work towards lasting solutions through survivor inclusion. All the speakers were survivors of trafficking and exploitation. One of the speakers, a survivor and researcher in Kenya, made it clear that ***“it’s the wearer of the shoe who knows where it hurts.”*** As was shared within the discussion, survivors have the lived experience. Survivors offer us a different lens through which to view things. They have lived within trafficking.

Many victims of human trafficking have experienced ignorance or misunderstanding in their attempts to get help. They have had traumatic post-rescue experiences during identification interviews and legal proceedings. Some have faced re-victimisation and punishment for crimes they were forced to commit by their traffickers. Others have been subjected to stigmatisation or received inadequate support. Learning from victims’ experiences and turning their suggestions into concrete actions will lead to a more victim-centred and effective approach in combating all forms of slavery and exploitation.

Presently the trafficking discourse is still largely overwhelmed by the ‘feeling good about feeling bad’ syndrome, rather than endeavouring to take the harder less glamorous route of unravelling the myriad of complex issues which see such criminal activity growing unabated. Many articles

written, whether by news media or concerned organisations, have a tendency to slant towards the saints, sinners, and saviours' paradigm with the emphasis on raids and rescue, the goody versus the baddie.

Whilst not decrying vital efforts to rescue a child or adult trapped in exploitative conditions, dramatic pictures used to promote the latest anti-trafficking – give us money and we can rescue a person -campaign, or the sensationalised news clip, does little to stem the crime, indeed such theatrical presentations have the potential to cause more harm than good.

The proliferation of awareness raising campaigns globally are now coming under growing scrutiny. At worst they are often seen as wasteful activities, where usefulness may be unknown or under-evaluated or – worse – where there is good evidence that they will not be useful. In her assessment of the wastefulness of human trafficking awareness campaigns, [Dina Haynes](#) (2019) argues that 'it is now well established in marketing sciences that after seeing a 'short spot' on human trafficking – such as a public service advertisement or poster – a majority of people can feel subconsciously satisfied with what they have contributed to the cause, with no further action undertaken on their part. Awareness campaigns can therefore make people feel good without asking much if anything in terms of a real contribution.' (2)

Now last but not least, What is the role of the church today in collaborating with others to address slavery and exploitation within their respective communities/countries?

At an online meeting of the United Nations Network on Migration one participant reminded us that , “we are all migrants”. That sense of belonging, our interconnectedness to all people and our planet, brings with it rights and responsibilities. As followers of Christ we are called to pick up

the mantle of inclusion and care for all people, widening our vision beyond our own doorstep into uncharted territory. Faith based organisations are found in every country throughout the world. Worth noting too is that many of those coming into New Zealand, and many other countries who are classified as migrants/refugees and asylum seekers come from such countries as the Philippines, the Pacific Islands and India.

Upon arrival many will seek out a church to belong too-a place that is safe and welcoming. This will, I suggest, be the case in many other countries too. Attending one of our advisory group meetings, a member once spoke of arriving in Wellington from Myanmar as a student-alone and unable to speak English well. She headed out into our city in search of a cross. Why? Because there, she told us, she would find a church where she could enter and feel safe.

It is now being increasingly recognised the valuable role faith based organisations can play in combating the exploitation of people within their communities. Indeed, as Minister Wood mentioned, New Zealand's first ever trafficking conviction began with a parishioner in a church noticing something was not right for a visitor to their Sunday service, so she invited her out for coffee and during the course of the conversation became aware more help was needed and with her permission contacted the department of Immigration.

The role of faith based organisations and the Church within these global dialogues, cannot be overstated. Our voices and our subsequent actions are vital within our troubled world today. Our Diocese, for the past 7 years has given focus to addressing issues relating to people trafficking and migrant labour exploitation. Working in partnerships with government staff, human rights groups, embassies, businesses, churches, and non-government

agencies. Representing our Diocese, we are, as a church, seated around the tables of government, embassies, and numerous other civil society organisations.

In 2019 Our Diocese, instigated The Modern slavery and labour exploitation advisory group. The group is facilitated by the Anglican Diocese of Wellington with myself as chair. Membership is made up of NGOs, faith based representatives, a migrant workers union, academia and business. We also have on board, as active observers, government staff from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment who lead our Governments work in the area of trafficking in persons and labour exploitation, the US Embassy, and the British High Commission.

A key role of the group is to offer government agencies a prime point of contact within the civil society/non-government sector for engaging on matters related to people trafficking, labour exploitation and related matters. To also provide informed 'flax roots' advice to the government sector on concerns, risks and emerging issues related to people trafficking and labour exploitation.

As a Diocese we have partnered with the Government and the US Embassy in holding trafficking conferences, and planning has begun on discerning whether we hold one again this year. I am, on behalf of the Diocese, a member of the government reference group, put in place to support the five year roll out of the Trafficking Plan of Action.

As a church we listen, we learn, we contribute, and we are consulted from a faith based perspective. Can we do more? Yes we can! As I begin to bring my presentation to a close I want to leave with you some questions for you to think through. They are questions I raised at one of our advisory group

meetings and I suggest they are very relevant for any church engagement going forwards.

- ✓ How do we ensure those most adversely affected by exploitation are heard?
- ✓ How do we broaden our vision beyond downstream responses?
- ✓ How can we radically re evaluate any ‘awareness raising’ activities so that they are fit for purpose for 2023 and beyond?
- ✓ And last, but not least, how can we begin to work more intentionally together to ensure such words as ‘collaboration and consultation’ are not merely used for the purpose of documentation, but rather as verbs for positive action.

A speaker at one of our conferences made the comment that *“its amazing what can be achieved, if we don’t mind who gets the credit.”*

So true, for alone we can do very little, together we can do so much. This global consultation offers us an incredible opportunity to begin to put that into effective action.

Rev Chris Frazer

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¹ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/20/think-again-human-trafficking/>