

INQUIRY INTO THE REGULATION OF BROTHELS

Name:



Date Received:

10/08/2015

Partially Confidential

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10/08/2015

The Committee Manager
Select Committee on the Regulation of Brothels
Parliament House,
Macquarie St,
Sydney NSW 2000

To whom it may concern,

As a sex worker, I am writing to make a submission to the Inquiry into the Regulation of Brothels. Sex workers are the key stakeholders in the process of evaluating the regulation of brothels in NSW.

The decriminalisation of sex work is essential to recognising the human rights of sex workers in Australia. Sex work has been decriminalised in NSW since 1995 and NSW is world-renowned as having a best practice model. The outcomes of decriminalisation in NSW have been:

- Extremely low rates of STIs and HIV (recognised by Australia's National Strategies and the Kirby Institute Annual Surveillance Report);¹
- Better access to health promotion (finding of the Law and Sex Worker Health Study, which compared the health impacts of legal frameworks across Victoria, NSW and WA);²
- No evidence of organised crime (recognised by the Land and Environment Court);³
- Better access to Occupational Health and Safety (WorkCover and SWOP worked with sex workers to create Health and Safety Guidelines for Brothels, which have been translated to Thai, Chinese and Korean);⁴
- Current evidence presented by the Lancet at AIDS 2014 found the decriminalisation of sex work would have the greatest impact on the HIV epidemic, reducing HIV by up to 46% in the next decade and resulting on cost saving thresholds of tens of millions of dollars globally.⁵

1 Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, Sixth National HIV Strategy 2010 - 2013, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2010, 16. Kirby Institute, HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexually Transmissible Infections in Australia Annual Surveillance Report, University of New South Wales, 2011, p8, Figure 46, Figure 34.

2 Christine Harcourt, J O'Connor, S Egger, C Fairly, H Wand, M Chen, L Marshall, J Kaldor, B Donovan, (2010), 'The Decriminalisation of Prostitution is Associated with Better Coverage of Health Promotion Programs for Sex Workers', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 34:5 at 482.

3 Martyn v Hornsby Council, cited in Nothing About Us Without Us, 'North Sydney Council Prohibits Home Occupation (Sex Services) in All Zones under the New Draft LEP', accessed at <http://nothing-about-us-without-us.com/tag/urban-realists/> on 30 October 2014.

4 NSW Government and Workcover, 'Health and Safety Guidelines for Brothels', accessed at http://workcover.nsw.gov.au/formspublications/publications/Documents/brothels_health_safety_guidelines_English_0120.pdf on 30 October 2014.

5 The Lancet. HIV and Sex Work, <http://www.thelancet.com/series/HIV-and-sex-workers>, July 2014, accessed on 30 October 2014.

I have personally worked in Victoria under its regulatory models and choose to work in a state where sex work is decriminalised because decriminalisation:

- Protects my anonymity and therefore the privacy of my family, my partner, and my partner's family. They should not have to be at risk of social or professional persecution because of my choice of career
- Makes the job of running my business easier and cheaper. As an independent sex worker, more administration is a genuine burden and cost to my business
- It is absolutely clear that what I do is legal. This means that my clients (exclusively women) can contact me with confidence and I can offer my services to them with confidence.
- Some of my clients are women with disabilities. They face significant difficulties in having their needs met already due to prejudice against sex workers in the disability care industry. Any change to sex work laws that casts doubt on the legality of what I do further disadvantages a group of women who have been denied by nature one of the things that able-bodied people take for granted – that is a healthy sex life
- I would rather see the state's resources (always in short supply we are told) put toward areas that really need it, like healthcare and public transport, rather than diverted into regulation that has been shown to make life worse for sex workers rather than better.

Yours Faithfully,

John Oh

(I am signing this letter with my “working name” rather than my legal name for the protection of my family, my partner, and her family. I do not have the right to expose them to social disapprobation because of my work, or my desire to make a submission to this enquiry)