

**Submission
No 71**

INQUIRY INTO THE REGULATION OF BROTHELS

Name: [REDACTED]

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I am writing to the committee considering brothel regulation as a person who has worked in the field of health and particularly HIV for twenty four years.

I am concerned that NSW government has not recognised the evidence showing the importance of decriminalisation in order to realise the low rates of HIV and STI's amongst sex workers.

I am surprised we are even having this discussion again as it seems councils are wanting to change the laws - but no-one else. Particularly not those of us that understand the importance of the public health outcomes that have been achieved in NSW and how difficult that achievement is to make and maintain. I have been a resident of NSW previously and am well aware of the push by local councils, media and others to have a licensing laws introduced.

I ask that the committee consider the evidence available to you and not to support a change to the laws. Decriminalisation is recognised as best practice - in fact last year in the lead up to the 20th International AIDs conference the Australian government promoted its achievements in this area to the world. The fact that it may be swiped aside to aid councils is astounding.

I suggest that you recommend a framework for councils to work within that stops this poor behaviour - particularly the political football they make of sex workers and the sex industry at each local election.

As a resident of Queensland and a committee member of Respect, the Qld health service for sex workers, I am aware of the failure of the licensing laws here.

Just recently 3 regional brothels of the 24 legal brothels have closed, this combined with councils banning sex industry businesses has recently in large areas where there simply is no legal brothel option.

Original plans were that the cost of licensing in Queensland would be covered the license fees charged to brothels. The reality is the limits on who can be an operator and the cost which makes running a brothel not a good investment means the costs have not been covered by license fees and are instead paid by tax payers funds.

A series of unrealistic requirements including not allowing sex workers to work in pairs and the heavy policing including entrapment are other factors to why this model does not work.

There has been much written on the failure of the licensing laws in Queensland and Victoria so I am quite disgusted that they would be considered.

The Swedish laws are misunderstood because of media portrayals but they put sex workers in danger and only make sense if you don't recognise that sex workers are male and trans too.

Please consider your task with the lives, safety and health of sex workers in mind. Sex workers are part of the community, live in council areas and contribute positively to the NSW community. It would be a great shame to make changes that take us back to the pre-decriminalisation days when male sex workers worked the wall and police corruption was rife.