

**Submission
No 85**

INQUIRY INTO THE REGULATION OF BROTHELS

Name:

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Date Received:

19/08/2015

Partially Confidential

19 August 2015

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

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to make a submission to the Inquiry into the Regulation of Brothels. I have been a sex worker for seventeen years. During that time, I have accumulated experience working in a range of contexts and states in Australia, and participated in sex work activism. I currently sit on the board of SWOP NSW. Sex workers are the key stakeholders in the process of evaluating the regulation of brothels, and as a sex worker, I am well placed to comment on what is important for us and for the wider community.

Innumerable studies show decriminalisation to be best practice for both sex workers and for the general population. Both the United Nations and Amnesty International endorse decriminalisation, after comprehensive research and evaluation. As a result, NSW is world-renowned for its progressive, effective and sensible model of decriminalisation, which came about in 1995 after the Wood Royal Commission proved that criminalisation and having the police as regulators of the industry was a failure. It would be a backwards step to decide to put the model of decriminalisation aside, and choose a less effective model for the NSW sex industry.

The impacts of decriminalisation are as follows:

- The human rights of sex workers are supported;
- The labour rights of sex workers are supported, along with 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)ⁱ;

- The recognition of sex work as legitimate work, in turn having a significant impact on the reduction of stigma and discrimination;
- Reducing the barriers to compliance for sex industry businesses;
- Better access to health promotion for sex workers;
- Decriminalisation has been shown to reduce the incidence of STIs and HIV in the sex work community as well as the general community and in NSW, the rates of STIs is extremely low (recognised by Australia's National Strategies and the Kirby Institute Annual Surveillance Report);ⁱⁱ
- The Lancet presented at AIDS 2014 and their current evidence shows that decriminalisation has the greatest impact on the HIV epidemic, reducing HIV by up to 46% in the next decade.ⁱⁱⁱ

Decriminalisation increases my ability to work safely and to make choices around how I work – sex worker safety is an essential part of a successful regulatory model. This model increases my opportunity to comply with the regulations already set in place for sex industry businesses. It is cost-effective and does not waste the time and resources that are wasted in other states of Australia, where police efforts are directed at regulating the sex industry instead of criminal activity. Police are not appropriate regulators of the sex industry.

Please support our human rights and our rights as sex workers. The model we are so proud of here in NSW must remain in place in order to support sex workers and the community as a whole.

Yours faithfully,



ⁱ NSW Government and Workcover, 'Health and Safety Guidelines for Brothels', 2001, accessed at http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0014/15134/brothels_health_safety_guidelines_English_0120.pdf on 12 August 2015.

ⁱⁱ 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.

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