INQUIRY INTO THE REGULATION OF BROTHELS

Organisation: New Zealand Prostitutes Collective
Name: Ms Catherine Healy
Date Received: 19/08/2015
Dear Committee members

Re: Inquiry into the Regulation of Brothels

As an organisation of sex workers, the New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective seeks to make a submission on the above Inquiry.

The New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective (NZPC) is a national organisation established by sex workers and supporters in 1987, and funded by the Ministry of Health since 1988.

NZPC currently operates peer led education and information services, and also advocates for the rights, health, and well-being of all sex workers. This includes providing information to local and central government authorities to support a legislative framework that upholds the occupational safety and health, as well as the rights, of sex workers.

We are interested in the topics that have been proposed for consideration as outlined in the terms of reference.

NZPC has an interest in any controls that impact on the sex industry both in New Zealand and Australia. We have long regarded the existing model in New South Wales as one to be emulated. We recognise that there are similarities between the New Zealand model and that in NSW that mitigate against creating harms. Any laws and policies can enhance, or provide a major impediment to, the occupational health and safety of sex workers.

We are strongly opposed to the specific registration of individual sex workers as this can cause stigma. Many sex workers circumvent registration schemes to avoid official documentation of their
sex work, and this puts them at serious disadvantage to seek support if something goes wrong. New Zealand does not have a registration scheme for individual sex workers, including those who are managing their own sex work and working from home based businesses.

We also believe that it is unnecessary to license individual brothels, large and small. The Prostitution Reform Act 2003 that allows sex work in New Zealand, including the operation of brothels with no limitation on size or numbers, does not include licensing of individual brothels. One council, Auckland Council, has a licensing scheme, but it is our understanding that after the expiry of that bylaw, they will allow this additional tier of licensing to drop. Its purpose may have been to establish liability, but there are a number of other means by which this can be established. Interestingly, the rest of the country does not have a licensing tier, and does not see a need for it.

We urge the Committee to not consider the registration of individual sex workers or the licensing of individual brothels, to allow as many options as possible for all sex workers, which are consistent with international best practice models.

Please do not hesitate to seek further information.

Yours sincerely

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