Submission No 76

## INQUIRY INTO THE REGULATION OF BROTHELS

Name:

**Date Received:** 19/08/2015

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. I've been doing sex work in Australia for almost five years now. I've worked at strip clubs in Brisbane, a peep show in Melbourne, brothels in Brisbane and most recently as a sole operator in Queensland. My experience of working in two states where sex work is heavily regulated has made it glaringly obvious to me that decriminalisation is by far the best model for sex workers to work under.

## Here's why:

- 1. In Queensland and Victoria I am subjected to mandatory three-monthly health checks in order to work in a licensed brothel. Thanks to a lack of sex worker-friendly health clinics, my friends and I often experience discrimination from the doctors doing these checks. I know workers who have been 'outed' (had their sex worker-status revealed) non-consensually by a doctor in front of everyone at reception, who have been refused by doctors who don't like workers, who have been treated with disgust and disdain, and who have had their certificates withheld from them until the test results come back, even though you do not need your results to get a valid certificate. Decriminalisation would mean we are in charge of our own bodies and our own health instead of being forced to test by the state, and forced to out ourselves by being required to have a sexual health certificate. Sex workers have lower STI rates than the general population because our bodies are our business and we are invested in looking after them.
- 2. In Queensland it is ILLEGAL for me to work with a friend who is also a sex worker. Despite the fact that this would help ensure my safety. Until recently it was illegal for me to even contact a friend who doesn't work, and let them know that I was still okay (alive!) following a booking. These kind of laws inhibit our ability to protect ourselves and put us at risk. Decriminalisation would mean that I could work out of the same dwelling as my friends and we could look out for each other. I would feel much safer at work if I could do this.
- 3. In Queensland, street-based sex work is criminalised. However, street-based workers deserve police protection like anyone else. There will always be workers who prefer to work on the street, for whatever reason: e.g. lack of access to a workspace. Decriminalisation would mean that these workers are still protected and don't have to worry about being charged if they experience violence from a client.
- 4. In 2013 the Queensland Attorney-General, Jarrod Bleijie, changed legislation to ALLOW moteliers, hotel-owners and landlords to DISCRIMINATE against people they believe to be sex workers, and to refuse them accommodation. The attorney-general changed the law to ENABLE DISCRIMINATION against sex workers. This kind of action makes sex

workers feel even more vulnerable when working in Queensland. It does not give us any faith in the justice system. After 13 years of being encouraged by the anti-discrimination commission to file complaints if we feel we've been discriminated against, the one time a worker did the law was changed so as to prevent future claims being made by sex workers. THEY DON'T WANT TO PROTECT US IN QUEENSLAND.

- 5. The current brothel licensing fees in Queensland are so excessive that hardly any brothels can afford it. This cuts out the opportunity for smaller businesses or worker cooperatives to get a license. Many workers prefer a small-scale workplace because this often means they have more control over their work environment, leading to better worker conditions. Decriminalisation makes this is possible; regulation prevents it.
- 6. When I worked in Melbourne, the work I was doing was criminalised. As a result, I knew that if my workplace was raided I could be arrested just for doing my job. Decriminalisation removes the threat of arrest and makes it possible for sex workers to report violence and exploitation.
- 7. Sex work is work and should be treated as such. We should be free to work like anyone else. Our industry should not be regulated by the police, who have a history of corruption, exploitation and violence against sex workers. We need workers' rights, not police regulation.

I sincerely hope that in this inquiry you prioritise the voices of sex workers, because we are the people who will be most affected by any changes. We are best placed to advise you on what works for us, and in my case, and in the cases of many sex workers who you will be hearing from, decriminalisation is by far the best framework for us to work under. We know this firsthand.

Yours faithfully,