



## Message from the Chair

The *Prostitution Act 1999* came into operation on 1 July 2000. Its core purpose was to extend the range of legality in the provision of sexual services beyond that which had in 1992 confirmed the legality of sole operators.

Henceforth the regulation and control of prostitution was to include the operation of brothels controlled through a system of licensing. The Prostitution Licensing Authority is the statutory body which has the central role in that process.

It was entirely predictable that there would be a mixed response within the community to the legislation – from, on the one hand, an endorsement of a statutory process for the regulation and control of prostitution which realistically would continue in any event to, on the other, a stricter view which would see the legislation as an endorsement of immorality.

The interface between legality and morality in relation to this and other social issues is certain to generate debate. However, any government-initiated scheme which is designed to limit the incidence of sexually transmissible infections, to ensure the safety of female sex workers, to seek to avoid the exploitation of those workers, or to seek to minimise the incidence of official corruption should be matters beyond debate.

The Prostitution Licensing Authority is on a steep learning curve. We have good reason to be satisfied that at the end of its first year of operation, the Authority is now well placed to execute its statutory role in a way which should meet the expectations of the legislators and of the wider community.

For this we are indebted to the several agencies with whom we have dealt so far. In particular, I place on record the Authority's recognition of the work of its small staff, in particular that of the Registrar, Ms Margaret Isaac. They too have been on a steep learning curve, which they have negotiated with distinction.

Finally, I am indebted to my colleagues who constitute the Authority for their professionalism and support.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W J Carter'.

**W J Carter QC**

CHAIR



## Registrar's report

Over the last twelve months the Prostitution Licensing Authority has made a number of achievements, but none I value more than gaining an understanding of the quite complex issues that confront this industry. To achieve that, we have had to demonstrate that we are listening and, to the eternal credit of the members of the industry and Self Health for Queensland Workers in the Sex Industry (SQWISI), you have ensured that our understanding of the industry is complete and that we are thoroughly aware of the issues that matter most to workers. It is through building this understanding that we are going to strive for success in making the Prostitution Act work.

The responsibility placed upon us by government is not underestimated; to try and balance community expectations with a fair administration system. In managing the administration process with fairness and equity, it is critical that only bona fide persons are licensed. Transparency, fairness, accountability and timeliness are just words to many people but the Prostitution Licensing Authority is charged with the responsibility to give them true meaning. We walk the talk and ensure that by any measure these principles have been applied and that one has not been compromised for another.

A superficial look at our achievements to date would suggest that we have problems with timeliness. We are constantly being asked why applications take so long to decide. Problems concerning development approvals aside, the answer is this: as the licensing body responsible for receiving and deciding applications we are working within predetermined boundaries and limits as determined by law. There are no short cuts, there are no substitutes and there can be no rationing off of responsibilities. We are not interested in entertaining the 'hit and miss' theory nor are we about 'trial and error'.

Given that we are only 12 months old, our concerns can not be restricted to what happens next, but what happens after what happens next. The history of the Queensland sex industry pre and post Fitzgerald, which you will read about further on, has provided fertile ground for the Prostitution Licensing Authority to carry out its responsibilities. I consider this of absolute primary importance, both to provide better service to our clients and because it lessens the costs to the community in the long term. This ship has to float and be prepared for any weather, and we can not afford any short cuts that would compromise our sea worthiness. The industry and government is counting on us to get this right.

As an organisation we are making ground with yet still plenty of ground to make. Through our achievements to date, and with our strategic partners, we are gaining momentum. We expect that organisations such as Queensland Health, Work Cover, Family Services, Local Government and the Queensland Police Service, will ensure that important social issues such as sexual health, workplace safety and safety of women, organised crime and official corruption are given the attention they warrant. Our long term partnering with these key agencies will assist us in delivering best governance. Understanding our client needs and balancing the community governance expectations is never going to be simple, but with a skilled Prostitution Licensing Authority and a healthy climate of cooperation across all those interested stakeholders we will continue the momentum to achieve the best possible result.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "M Isaac".

**M Isaac**  
REGISTRAR