



## The Environment in which we Operate





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The Queensland Government has continued its commitment to prostitution law reform, which has been ongoing since the Fitzgerald Inquiry in 1989. The PLA considers that the first five years have been successful in establishing licensed brothels in Queensland.

Five principles guided the initial development of the framework for the regulation of prostitution in Queensland:

- Ensuring the quality of life for local communities
- Safeguarding against corruption and organised crime
- Addressing social factors which contribute to involvement in the sex industry
- Ensuring a healthy society
- Promoting safety.

The PLA has worked to support these principles and continue the orderly development of the licensed industry in Queensland.

The PLA regards workplace health and safety for workers in the licensed sex industry as a high priority.

By and large the Queensland community accepts a strictly regulated industry. The community generally accepts the restrictions placed on the licensed sex industry.

The CMC has reported that there is no evidence of involvement by organised crime in licensed brothels in Queensland.

The number of licensed brothels operating in Queensland has increased from 16 in 2004-05 to 21 in 2005-06.

The PLA has maintained its support for the industry. In March 2006, after consultation with Government agencies, industry representatives and licensees released the *Guidelines for the Operation of Licensed Brothels in Queensland*. The resource provides a point of reference for brothel operations and a useful guide for licensees pursuing best practice.

In September 2005 the CMC examined through a public hearing process the question of whether legal outcall prostitution services in Queensland should be extended to licensed brothels or escort agencies. The PLA participated in the CMC's inquiry, provided extensive submissions and attended the public hearings.

The PLA supported the extension of regulation to escort services by development of the existing licensing scheme through licensed brothels.

The CMC indicated concerns regarding risks of sex trafficking and child prostitution. The PLA submitted that the controls in place for licensed brothels were adequate to allay these fears and that it is in the illegal industry that child prostitutes and trafficked women are likely to be found.

In its review of the Prostitution Act, the CMC observed that all informants to the review, including all government representatives, the PLA, all sex workers and all licensees who were interviewed for the review, were in agreement that the inability of legal brothels to provide an escort or outcall service was the most crucial impediment to the success of the Act.

Licensees have made clear the considerable difficulties they have in being unable to provide escorts and in competing with the illegal industry.

During Sexpo the PLA conducted a survey and, amongst other things, asked whether people believed licensed brothels should be allowed to provide escort services. While some caution should be exercised with the results, the overwhelming majority of respondents reported that they believed licensed brothels should be allowed to provide escort services.

The CMC is yet to finalise its recommendations and a final report is shortly to be released. However, the final decision as to whether there will be an introduction of escort services from licensed brothels is a policy matter for consideration by the Government.

In December 2004 the CMC released its report *Regulating Prostitution: An Evaluation of the Prostitution Act 1999*. The PLA submitted a number of recommendations to the CMC and many of these were subsequently included in the CMC recommendations to Government. These included:

- Increasing the number of sex workers allowed on premises from five to eight
- Expanding the jurisdiction of the Independent Assessor
- Increasing the PLA's power to request information from persons other than an applicant
- Creating an Interdepartmental Working Group on Prostitution
- Increasing the currency of licences and certificates from one year to three years.

In November 2005 the Government tabled its response in Parliament to the CMC's Report. On 28 March 2006 the Government introduced the Prostitution Amendment Bill 2006. The Bill reflects the Government's continued commitment to prostitution law reform. Of the 29 recommendations contained in the CMC's Report, the Bill implements 17 through legislative means. Other relevant recommendations have been implemented through policy and administrative change.

The critical challenges for the PLA during the 2006-07 financial year will be the implementation of the legislative amendments and non-legislative changes resulting from the introduction of the Prostitution Amendment Bill and responding to the CMC's final report on escort prostitution services.

