

# Message from the Chairperson

On 14 November 2014, I was honoured to be appointed as Chairperson of the Prostitution Licensing Authority for a term of five years. I take this opportunity to acknowledge my predecessor, Mr Manus Boyce, who retired as Chairman on 13 November 2014. He had served in that capacity for almost a decade, being first appointed in May 2005. Mr Boyce brought an incisive intellect to the Authority, a willingness to listen and consult, and a keen regard for the regulation of licensed brothels in the public interest.

I am pleased to report that the Authority is fulfilling its statutory functions to a high standard. During the year, the PLA continued its careful scrutiny of applicants for brothel licences and approved manager's certificates to ensure that they were suitable persons for involvement in the licensed sector of the sex industry. Three applicants for an approved manager's certificate were found not to be suitable and their applications were refused by the Authority. The PLA also continued to closely monitor the operations of licensed brothels via its compliance function. Whilst brothel licensees are generally diligent in attending to any matters of non-compliance, there were some cases of non-compliances not being addressed in a timely fashion or being identified over successive audits. As a result, I oversaw a process by which licensees are now given a specified period in which to achieve compliance or otherwise be requested to appear to provide an explanation to members of the Authority.

In the 15 years since its establishment, careful scrutiny of applicants and monitoring of the operations of licensed brothels by the PLA has ensured that there has been no confirmed instance of the infiltration of organised crime, or the incidence of official corruption, or of human trafficking for the purpose of sexual servitude at any of the State's licensed brothels. The PLA prioritises safe and secure environments at licensed brothels, at which the autonomy of sex workers is paramount. Licensed brothels are acknowledged as providing the safest and healthiest environment for sex work. During the year, the Authority recorded no evidence, nor received any substantiated complaints, of any abuse of human rights, sex worker coercion or adverse impact on community amenity by any licensed brothel.

During the year, the licensed brothel sector reached its highest ever number of brothels. The opening of a brothel at Marcoola on 4 July 2014 brought the number of brothels in the State to 27. Whilst still a modest number, and recognising that most prostitution occurs outside of licensed brothels, this was an important achievement in ensuring that the worthy objectives of the *Prostitution Act 1999* are being met. The PLA has no interest in expansion of the sector for its own sake but only to further these objectives in the public interest. For most of the year, this record number of brothels was maintained but on 27 May 2015, the brothel in Mt Isa ceased to operate, so that the year closed with a total of 26 brothels in the State.

In 2015-16, the PLA continues to be well-placed to administer an efficient and effective brothel licensing and regulatory framework that achieves the objectives of the Prostitution Act.

The Hon Yvette D'Ath MP was appointed Attorney-General and Minister for Justice and Minister for Training and Skills on 16 February 2015. The PLA falls within her portfolio. I place on record the PLA's appreciation of the support given to it by the Minister and her staff. I also acknowledge the support of the previous portfolio Minister, the Hon Jarrod Bleijie MP. I also recognise and value the assistance of various government agencies that have so professionally supported and enhanced the work of the PLA. I extend my thanks to my fellow members of the PLA who each bring a range of knowledge and experience to their position, and whose wisdom and counsel I rely on. Finally, I thank the staff of the Office of the PLA for their assistance during the year. I particularly acknowledge the able and efficient administration of the Executive Director of the Office of the PLA, Ms Margaret Isaac. Her knowledge of the sex industry and wise counsel has been of great assistance to me, particularly in the early days of my appointment.

Marshall Irwin  
**Chairperson**