

Issue 37 – June/July 2009

Important advice re *STD Handbook*

Do you have a copy of the *STD Handbook: A reference guide for sex workers to sexually transmissible diseases*, produced by the Australian National Council on AIDS, Hepatitis C and Related Diseases? The *STD Handbook* is out of date, having been published over a decade ago, and should not be relied upon. It is strongly advised that you should discard any copies that you might have and seek more contemporary information on sexually transmissible infections (STIs).

The *STD Handbook* was published in 1998, and except for the section on Hepatitis C, which was approved in 2003, its content has not been updated since 1998. The PLA has recently received advice from Queensland Health that the *STD Handbook* contains information which is no longer accurate or consistent with best practice. For example, in relation to the use of spermicides and douching. Queensland Health has further advised that some of the information could be seen as potentially harmful and/or detrimental to persons that rely on that information. A copy of the relevant Queensland Health letter was sent to all brothel licensees and managers.

The recommendation of Queensland Health is that information on STIs and sexual health should instead be sought from two websites.

One option is the Queensland Health HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C and Sexual Health website:
www.health.qld.gov.au/sexhealth

The Queensland Health website contains a range of information including, but not limited to, safer sex, symptoms of STIs, clinical information, and fact sheets.

A second option is the SQWISI website, now maintained by Family Planning Queensland:
www.sqwisi.org.au

Accurate and up-to-date information is crucial to the well-being of both sex workers and clients. Continued reliance on the *STD Handbook* might be injurious to your health. Any copies that you have should be immediately discarded and replaced with a more accurate and current resource.

Financial benefit from prostitution

The PLA does not condone the practice of approved managers coercing financial benefit from sex workers at licensed brothels. By this, we mean an approved manager demanding that a sex worker pay them a 'kick back' (a monetary reward) as a payment for being allocated clients or for receiving some other favourable treatment. The inevitable concern of sex workers facing such demands is that failure to provide the 'kick back' would disadvantage them, such as by other sex workers receiving preferential treatment, or in the form of limited opportunities to perform client introductions, or a reduction in their shifts at the brothel. Another example would be a sex worker voluntarily offering to provide a manager with 'kick backs' in return for preferential treatment, so as to disadvantage other sex workers at the brothel. Other sex workers at the brothel who then became aware of this arrangement would feel

pressured to come to a similar agreement with the manager. At the very least, this practice is unethical. At worst, the QPS may undertake investigations for possible offences under relevant legislation.

Brothel licence condition 18 states that sex workers should not be unfairly penalised. Making demands for 'kick backs' may be seen as bullying, coercion, a form of blackmail or potentially as a serious offence under the Criminal Code. Any negative effect on a sex worker under such circumstances will also be investigated by the PLA for a breach of a condition of the brothel licence or of the manager's certificate.

Sex workers must never feel obliged or pressured to provide a 'kick back' to an approved manager. Brothel licensees are responsible for ensuring that approved managers are operating within the lawful policy of the brothel. The PLA would recommend that they should speak to approved managers and sex workers at the brothel and inform them that such a 'private arrangement' is not condoned or accepted and might have serious consequences.

Finally, the PLA would be interested in any information that licensees, approved managers or sex workers might have in relation to the prevalence of this unacceptable practice within the licensed brothel industry. The PLA compliance unit can be contacted on 07 3858 9500.

Sex worker commitment to safer sex

Sex workers and sex worker organisations (by providing peer education) in Australia have demonstrated an on-going commitment to safer sex practices, and have been central to the national response to containing HIV/AIDS. This is exemplified by the following statement of the Department of Health and Ageing at page 28 of the *National Sexually Transmissible Infections Strategy 2005-2008*:

Despite the occupational risks, the incidence of STIs in sex workers in Australia is among the lowest in the world. This has largely been achieved through the adoption of voluntary health policies implemented by the sex industry.

Sex workers and their organisations should be commended for their efforts to stop the spread of STIs in the community.

Trafficking in persons

In February 2009, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime released its *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons*. It is argued in the report that a more accurate description of 'trafficking in persons' would be enslavement. By far the most common form of trafficking is sexual exploitation, representing 79 percent of all identified cases internationally. However, it is noted that sexual exploitation tends to be more visible than other forms of human trafficking, such as forced labour, which may be under-reported.

The report also reveals that a disproportionate number of women are traffickers. It states that: "Female offenders have a more prominent role in present-day slavery than in most other forms of crime."

The report also refers to a growing international consensus of the need to combat this insidious crime.

Since the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons came into effect in December 2003, the number of countries with anti-trafficking legislation has more than doubled. The report also noted that in Australia:

From 2003 to November 2008, 34 people have been charged with trafficking related offences, resulting in eight convictions. At the time of the writing six cases were before the courts involving 15 defendants.

People trafficking and sexual servitude are an affront to basic human rights and dignity. Victims or people with information about human trafficking or other serious Commonwealth offences should contact the Australian Federal Police by phoning 1800 813 784.

Do you have any suggestions for future *In Touch* articles?

The PLA is always keen to receive suggestions about articles for future editions of *In Touch*. If there is something that you would particularly like to see covered please let us know by emailing your suggestion to plaadmin@iprimus.com.au.

2009 PLA meeting dates

The PLA Board generally meets on the first Monday of each month. Meeting dates for the remainder of 2009 are: 6 July, 3 August, 7 September, 5 October, 2 November, and 7 December. *Whilst current at the time of printing, these dates are tentative and subject to change without notice.*

Vacancies for Approved Manager positions

Cleo's on Nile: 12 Nile St, Woolloongabba. Seeking an approved manager for a busy inner city brothel – beautiful premises and undercover parking. Flexible hours with great conditions – Open 24/7. Contact Lyn on 3393 1678 or admin@cleosonnile.com.

Scarlet Harem: 14 Avian St, Kunda Park, Maroochydore. Sunshine Coast brothel requires an approved manager. Immediate start. 24/7 rosters. Excellent conditions await you. Come join our team. Managers are not required to do sexual health checks. Phone 5476 5044 or email love@scarletharem.com.

Asian Star on Meadow: New brothel at 1/32 Meadow Ave, Coopers Plains in Brisbane opened on 12 June. Seeking one approved manager for weekend day shift from 9am to 6pm or casual. Excellent conditions with great bonus. Please contact Carmen on 0415764788, or email to ccyy309@yahoo.com.

Montecito: 180 Abbotsford Rd, Bowen Hills. Approved manager wanted. We are currently looking for a strong and dynamic person to join our management team. Do you have a professional phone manner with outstanding customer service skills and can time manage as well as multi-task? Excellent working conditions. Please contact Joe on 3852 2057 or email admin@montecito.net.au.

Yimi476: 476 Boundary Rd, Archerfield. Requires two approved managers for an immediate start. For interview please call Ian on 0401047237.

Please note that approved manager advertisements may be submitted at any time for inclusion in the next edition of the newsletter. They should be emailed to plaadmin@iprimus.com.au