Brothel licensing for New South Wales?

On 10 November 2015, the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales (NSW) Select Committee on the Regulation of Brothels reported on its Inquiry into the regulation of brothels. The committee has recommended the introduction of a brothel licensing system in NSW, stating that:

... it would assist with proper enforcement of the planning laws, allow for better protection of sex workers from exploitation and danger, assist with fighting organised criminal elements of the industry, and ensure only fit and proper persons control and operate brothels. (recommendation 11)

In accordance with recommendation 13 of the committee, intrinsic to the licensing system would be a “fit and proper person” test to ensure that owners and managers are suitable for involvement in the licensed brothel sector. Concerns about the exploitation of sex workers (including the potential for sexual servitude) and the attractiveness of the sex industry to organised crime are central to the committee’s recommendation for a brothel licensing system. The committee found that the sex industry is attractive to organised crime, particularly because it is largely cash based, facilitating money laundering. The committee relied on evidence from the NSW Police that about, “40 brothels have some recorded connection or ties to outlaw motorcycle gangs” (p. 47).

Under recommendation 16 of the committee, the NSW Government would, “identify or create a body to administer the licensing process”. This envisages that a stand-alone licensing body need not necessarily be created but that an existing entity could take responsibility for administration of the licensing system.

The committee considered whether the recommended licensing system should include registration of sex workers, deciding that it did not support such a register. The report says that the committee, “received particularly strong evidence against any system that seeks to register sex workers” (p. 82). The committee considered a submission from the Prostitution Licensing Authority (PLA) which referred to the stigmatising, ineffective and damaging nature of sex worker registration. The committee noted evidence that the likely impact of registering sex workers would be to force them underground, isolating them from support services. The PLA has previously referred to the danger of people on a register being branded for life as a sex worker. The committee found that:

... the registration of sex workers provides the potential for a lifetime of stigma for sex workers, many of whom work in the industry for only a small part of their lives. (p. 103)

The committee also considered the Nordic model (also known as the Swedish model) which involves the criminalisation of the purchase of sexual services (i.e. criminalisation of sex worker clients) with the ultimate goal of abolition of the sex industry. The committee received conflicting evidence on the effectiveness and impact of the model, such that it was unable to come to a conclusion about the model’s efficacy. Ultimately, the committee decided that it did not support the introduction of the model in NSW. In particular, the committee found that:

The difficulties for sex workers to access support services or talk to the police under this model could have significant negative effects on their wellbeing. (p. 95)

The committee also found, “the Nordic model’s characterisation of sex workers as victims and clients as perpetrators to be oversimplified” (p. 95). In his foreword to the report, the Chair of the committee, Mr Alister Henskens SC MP, stated his view that: “Government should not criminalise sex work where it is a consensual activity between adults” (p. iv).

The committee’s recommendations are not binding on the NSW Government, but a response is due by 10 May 2016.
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.

Respect Inc Career Development Program

Respect Inc, the Queensland sex worker organisation, has a Career Development Program (CDP) offering free and confidential support to sex workers who would like to expand their current skills or explore other employment and training options. The program can help with:

- improving current skills in sex work
- skills identification
- deciding which direction workers would like to take
- exploring other employment options for workers who would like to take a break from sex work or who would like to reduce their hours or exit the industry
- developing a career or training plan
- writing a resume
- gaining new skills, such as interview skills
- searching for other work
- training advice
- applying for TAFE or university
- referral to other support agencies.

The PLA has also made a contribution to Respect Inc for a courses costs subsidy, which leverages the CDP. The purpose of the courses costs subsidy is to defray the cost of courses for CDP participants. So far, participants have received subsidies for courses such as mining induction, first aid, introduction to bookkeeping and accounting, responsible service of alcohol, and barista.

For further information refer to the Respect Inc website, www.respectqld.org.au, send an email to cdp@respectqld.org.au, or call 3835 1111.

Original approved manager’s certificates

Approved managers should ensure they retain their original certificate. The PLA sends a copy of the certificate to the brothel(s) at which the manager is authorised to work. Ideally, the original certificate should not be kept at the brothel because the manager may not be able to retrieve it if they cease working at the brothel. If an approved manager decides to permanently leave the industry or the PLA suspends or cancels their certificate, the approved manager should surrender the certificate to the PLA (s. 58, Prostitution Act 1999).

2016 PLA meeting dates

The PLA Board generally meets on the first Monday of each month. Meeting dates for the remainder of 2016 are: 7 March, 4 April, 9 May, 6 June, 4 July, 15 August, 5 September, 10 October, 7 November, and 5 December. Whilst current at the time of printing, these dates are tentative and subject to change without notice.

Vacancies for approved manager positions

Luvasian: Gold Coast brothel is seeking full-time/part-time approved manager, preferably living on Gold Coast. Various shifts are available. Flexible with working hours, honest, friendly manner, and multi-tasking are preferable. Please call Cheryl on 0412174588 for details.

Asian Star: Casual manager required for a brothel at Coopers Plains. Must be honest, reliable, friendly, and already hold an approved manager’s certificate. Work experience preferred. Please ring Carly on 0422023351 for an interview.

Pryana Rose: A part-time manager’s position is available at a Yatala brothel for a reliable, trustworthy person with a friendly and bubbly personality. The shifts are seven to 10 hours in length, with a regular Saturday night shift. Duties include reception work, preferably with brothel keeper/AHMS experience (but we can train you), laundry, topping up supplies and general tidy up. Please call Mia on 0422877497 or email pryanarose@gmail.com.

Platinum 175: Seeking full-time/part-time approved manager. Will be responsible for day-to-day management of the brothel including front of house client queries, facilitating bookings, and in-house sales and promotion. A high level of commitment to customer service, excellent work ethic, reliability, and excellent communication skills are essential. We offer competitive pay and work/life balance. Please email resume with cover letter to manager@platinum175.com.au (attention Tania) or call 0400701898.

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.

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