

## Issue 123 – September 2017

### Appointment of Acting Chairperson

Mr Paul Tully has been appointed as Acting Chairperson of the Prostitution Licensing Authority from 18 August to 2 October 2017. Mr Tully has been a member of the PLA (as legal representative) for almost three years.

### Violence against sex workers

The nature of sex work means that sex workers may be vulnerable to acts of violence from clients or others. No matter their occupation, all persons are entitled to a safe and healthy workplace, free of violence and exploitation. Violence against sex workers is not just wrong, it is a crime. It should never be excused or rationalised as being “part of the job” or something that workers have brought on themselves by nature of their occupation (victim blaming) or something that will have a lesser impact on them because of their work (dehumanising sex workers).

This is highlighted by a recent situation in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), where two brothers have pleaded guilty to robbing and sexually assaulting a number of sex workers. Justice David Mossop of the ACT Supreme Court sentenced one of the men to seven years and 11 months imprisonment with a

non-parole period of five years and six months. The other offender was sentenced to eight years and one month imprisonment, with a non-parole period of five years and eight months. One of the sex workers has made a powerful and insightful victim impact statement which details not only the personal impact of the attack but challenges the prevailing myths and stereotypes about sex work and the stigma they perpetuate, stating that:

*For 15 minutes last May I was convinced I was going to die. I have never felt fear like that in my life. The sheer terror of being threatened with a weapon, and not knowing whether that person can even be reasoned with, not knowing how you are going to get yourself out of the situation, and having a grave feeling that it is not going to end well – it is something I would never wish on anyone. Let alone the sexual assault that followed.*

*I was raped while doing my job, and I feel like there is so much more shame and stigma attached to that for me. I love my job and I am very proud of the business I have grown. I work in a legitimate, legal industry, and I pay my taxes, but as a sex worker I face so much stigma and so many stereotypes. Those prevailing myths about the sex industry, based on misconceptions about the nature of my work, make what happened to me so much more difficult.*

*They go along the lines of suggesting that as a sex worker I am somehow culpable or share some blame in what happened to me; that we put ourselves in a situation which obviously leads to sex, so consent doesn't mean the same for us; it isn't really rape; there is the myth of the inevitability of violence, that my job is inherently dangerous, that sex workers often suffer abuse from clients, that sex workers place ourselves in harm's way – so what did I expect would happen to me?*

*These are all wrong, and they aren't representative of my job. I make empowered choices and decisions regarding my job every day. I demand respect from my clients and I get it. The sexual acts within my commercial sexual transactions are often much more clearly and heavily negotiated than you would find in the non-sex world.*

*But as a sex worker, you absorb these social attitudes nonetheless. So, when something horrible did happen to me, when I was raped on the job, I felt ashamed to tell anyone. Every time I divulged to a friend what happened to me, I felt like my news had to come with a disclaimer, that I had to explain myself, justify the security measures that I usually employ while working, explain that it wasn't my fault, and that what happened to me is not normal.*

*Because what happened to me wasn't my fault. And what happened to me is not normal. I'm a sex worker but I'm also a human being. Some people might not agree with my job or my industry, but I deserve to be unconditionally*

*safe at work. The stigma and stereotypes and negative social attitudes towards my work, they put me at risk. They say to people like my attacker that I am an easy target, and that I'm not deserving of the same level of respect as other women in the community. I am not an easy target and I am deserving of respect.*

*My only hope after this ordeal is that fewer sex workers will ever have to go through what happened to me. The level of respect, kindness and support shown to me from the ACT police and DPP has given me much to hope for. I hope that people in the community will see the outcome of this case and be reminded that violence against sex workers is never OK, that we are unconditionally deserving of the same rights as any other person in any other industry or profession, that we are not easy targets, and that men like this who stand here today think twice before targeting a sex worker on the job and thinking they can get away with it.*

Whilst the risk of violence against sex workers can never be entirely eliminated, it can be minimised. Brothel licensees and approved managers are responsible for providing a safe and healthy environment for sex work at brothels. Sole operator sex workers are basically self-employed, running their own business, and are responsible for identifying and managing their own risks. Respect Inc, the Queensland sex worker organisation, has published a number of relevant fact sheets, available from [www.respectqld.org.au](http://www.respectqld.org.au).

There is significant under-reporting of sexual assault in the community, and for the reasons described above sex workers may be even more reluctant to report it to authorities. Ultimately, it is a matter for individuals and they

should do what is best for them in their circumstances, but reporting these crimes to the police might stop it from happening again, or happening to another worker, and sends an important message to the community that workers cannot be abused and violated with impunity. The Queensland Police Service website has a range of information for survivors of sexual assault, including an alternative reporting option which allows survivors to remain anonymous if they wish. This information can be located here: [www.police.qld.gov.au/programs/adultassault/adultasslt.htm](http://www.police.qld.gov.au/programs/adultassault/adultasslt.htm).

There is also a State-wide Sexual Assault Helpline (1800 010 120) which offers telephone support and counselling to anyone who has been sexually assaulted, whether recently or in the past. According to the organisation's website: *In the case of a very recent assault not only can we give you the emotional support you need but importantly we can provide practical advice about forensic and medical examination, risk of becoming pregnant, local services you can access, as well as how to make a complaint to the police.*

**If this article has raised issues for you, help is available by contacting Lifeline on 13 11 14.**

### 2017 PLA meeting dates

To be advised.

### Vacancies for approved manager positions

**Utopia in Paradise:** Approved manager wanted. Casual shifts available. Please send resume to [utopiainparadise@outlook.com](mailto:utopiainparadise@outlook.com).

**Cleo's on Nile:** Woolloongabba brothel wanting an approved manager to join our friendly team. We would like someone that is customer focused, reliable and a great multitasker. We can offer a variety of shifts and great pay. Please email resume to [trish@cleosonnile.com.au](mailto:trish@cleosonnile.com.au) or call for a personal chat on 0481063091.

**Platinum 175:** Seeking full-time/part-time approved manager. Will be responsible for day-to-day management of the brothel including front of house 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](mailto:manager@platinum175.com.au) (attention Tania) or call 0400701898.

**Asian Star:** A part-time or full-time manager is required to join our team. We are located at Coopers Plains area. We seek an honest, patient, reliable, friendly manager with an easy going personality. Work experience preferred and must hold an approved manager's certificate. Good pay rate and bonus system. Please call Carly on 0422023351 for interview.

**Cub 26:** Seeking a part-time casual manager to join our team. Must be experienced, honest, reliable and friendly, can work on a rotating roster over 7 days (mainly night and grave shifts) and able to multi-task. Please email your resume along with references to [club26pinkpop@gmail.com](mailto:club26pinkpop@gmail.com) or call 3803 1000.

**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](mailto:plaadmin@iprimus.com.au).**