Preface

The Prostitution Licensing Authority (PLA) is pleased to present this report Selling Sex in Queensland.

Prostitution is a high profile and emotive issue attracting media and public interest. Early in the term of the newly established Authority we identified a need for contemporary information about the sex industry, its participants, its impact on the community and the effect of its regulation. We knew there were significant gaps in our knowledge of the industry and we were keen to provide better information to Government and to Queenslanders about the influence of the Prostitution Act 1999.

The PLA commissioned the expertise of leading academics in the fields of criminology and public health to undertake a four-phased research strategy:

1. A survey of sex workers
2. A survey of their clients
3. A survey of community attitudes
4. A survey of public health data.

The research design was built on key prostitution-related research conducted prior to the introduction of the Prostitution Act, enabling comparison with data collected before the era of licensed brothels in Queensland.

This report will enable the PLA to advise government and the community on the operation of the sex industry generally and to guide its programs and other activities. This is a unique research program which will provide the data we require to analyse the legislation, identify gaps in the framework and provide evidence-based policy advice to Government.

The results of the research have given us critical insight into the sex industry and its operation. Clearly the introduction of licensed brothels has provided an important option for sex workers concerned about their physical safety. On the other hand, however, the research points to the particular vulnerability and needs of street sex workers who are as yet unassisted by the regulatory framework. Given the unsolved homicides of three sex workers in Queensland over recent years, this would seem an obvious area for attention.

Finally, I would like to gratefully acknowledge the assistance of my colleagues on the Steering Committee – Dr Ian Wilkey, Dr John Patten, Dr Paul Mazerolle and Ms Anne Edwards – for their work in overseeing this project.

W J Carter QC
Chair, Prostitution Licensing Authority

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