



6 May 2021

Secretary of the Committee
C/- Parliament House
GPO Box 572, Adelaide 5001

By email: rswo@parliament.sa.gov.au

Dear Committee Members,

Select Committee on Statutes Amendment (Repeal of Sex Work Offenses) Bill

I am writing in support of the *Statutes Amendment (Repeal of Sex Work Offenses) Bill*, and to endorse submissions made by the Scarlet Alliance and SIN to this Committee.

Thorne Harbour Health is one of Australia's largest community-controlled LGBTIQ+ and HIV health service providers, and serves LGBTIQ+ people and people living with HIV in South Australia. Thorne Harbour Health provides a range of services including health promotion, sexual health testing, general practice, and mental health and wraparound support services.

Our offerings include a joint initiative with SHINE SA, the South Australia Mobilisation + Empowerment for Sexual health (SAMESH). SAMESH provides people with information, education, and programs to enhance their sexual health and well-being. These services are open to people of all cultural backgrounds and gender experiences.

Research indicates that a large majority of sex workers are from LGBT communities.¹ These communities are therefore disproportionately impacted by the criminalisation of sex work.

The criminalisation of sex work has been linked to disproportionate risk of violence and poor health outcomes experienced by sex workers.² Evidence indicates that the decriminalisation of sex work is fundamental to better health outcomes for sex workers and their clients.³ A paper on HIV and sex workers published in *The Lancet* detailed how the decriminalisation of sex work would have the greatest effect at reducing HIV epidemics across the whole population, with 33–46% of HIV infections averted in the next decade.⁴

¹ 64% of sex workers surveyed in NSW identified as other than "heterosexual/straight": Roberta Perkins, 'Working Girls: Prostitutes, Their Life and Social Control' *Australian Institute of Criminology* (1991). In research conducted by Vixen Collective in late 2017/early 2018, 72% of sex workers surveyed (in a national survey) identified as other than heterosexual, with 4.7% of participants being trans and 11% non-binary. Research in the United Kingdom has produced similar results, with 66% of those surveyed identified as other than straight: Nicola Smith and Sarah Kingston, 'Policy-Relevant Report: Statistics on Sex Work in the UK' University of Birmingham.

² Lucy Platt et al, 'Associations between Sex Work Laws and Sex Workers' Health: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of Quantitative and Qualitative Studies' (2018) 15(12) *PLoS medicine* e1002680.

³ Basil Donovan et al, 'Improving the health of sex workers in NSW: maintaining success' (New South Wales Public Health Bulletin 9, 2010) 21 (4); Michael Rekart, 'Sex-work harm reduction' (2016) 366 *The Lancet* 9503 2123-2134.

⁴ Kate Shannon et al, 'Global Epidemiology of HIV among Female Sex Workers: Influence of Structural Determinants' (2015) 385(9962) *The Lancet* 67.

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While we understand the Bill does not seek to establish a licensing scheme, we wish to note our opposition to a licensing scheme or any scheme that imposes barriers for sole traders.

We also note that building on this reform, there is a need to better protect sex workers and other industry workers. To that end, OH&S guidelines should be developed in collaboration with the Scarlet Alliance, SIN, and SafeWork SA, and the *Equal Opportunity Act 1984* (SA) should be amended to prohibit discrimination against people based on their working or having worked in the sex work industry.

There should be no criminal or civil penalties for consenting adults engaging in the business of sex work. Thorne Harbour Health supports the full decriminalisation of sex work, and congratulates the South Australian Government on working to progress this important reform.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'SRH', with a small horizontal line at the end.

Simon Ruth
Chief Executive Officer
Thorne Harbour Health