

Criminal Code (Decriminalising Sex Work) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 64
Submitted by: [REDACTED]
Publication: Making the submission public but withholding your name
Attachments: See attachment
Submitter Comments:

Committee Secretary
Housing, Big Build and Manufacturing
Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000

Dear Committee Members

Letter in support of the decriminalisation of sex work

I heard from Respect and DecrimQld that you were accepting submissions about the legislation for the decriminalisation of sex work. I support that 100% and would like it to happen as soon as possible.

I appreciate your call for input and the chance to share why I support the decriminalisation of sex work in Queensland. Since the information I am sharing here is quite personal, I would prefer that my name and personal details are not shared beyond the committee (although I'm happy if you share what I'm saying in an anonymous way). I have used my sex working name here and have provided a phone number and mailing address if you need to verify my identity.

I am an older woman – in my mid-50s – and unfortunately I can tell you that Queensland's laws are VERY unfriendly to older women doing sex work! Believe me, there is little more humiliating than going into one of the (very few) licensed brothels, only to have management assess your age and refuse you work! And I get it – they're paying crazy licensing fees and can't afford a person on their roster who doesn't interest every client who walks in the door. But even if I am not the right person for every client, there's a lot of older men who don't want to book someone the age of their granddaughter!

So, if I want to work legally, my only options are to work all by myself as a sole trader in Queensland, or travel interstate – neither of which are great for me. Working alone is hard work -- I don't want to be receptionist, security, supplies purchasing officer, cleaner, advertising and marketing manager. And if something goes wrong on a booking, I don't want to be alone! Also, working alone in Queensland as an older woman means I probably have to work from home, because I likely won't earn enough to pay for a hotel room each time I get a booking.

The ways I would prefer to work are at an escort agency, brothel or massage parlour or sharing a place with a colleague. There I am not alone, can separate my work and home, and don't have to handle all the business admin – even if I have to pay them part of my earnings. But none of these options are available in Queensland.

By contrast, New South Wales and Victoria are both much more age-friendly than Queensland. In both those states there are many establishments that promote older women – and some that ONLY employ older women. So that's my number one concern – being able to work with other sex workers – either informally sharing a place and looking out for each other, or at establishment that is age-friendly.

My second concern is that we really need to fix the Anti-Discrimination Act so that there aren't any loopholes that permit discrimination against sex workers – for who am, for what I do, for what I've done in the past, or for what they (probably inaccurately) imagine I'm going to do. My housing, my bank accounts, my Blue Card and volunteer work with young people, my job applications should not be at risk, just because sex work is so stigmatised.

Another aspect of that stigma and discrimination that worries me is that one day I'll likely end up in a nursing home. When I have less capacity to defend my choices, I don't want to be humiliated, or mocked or refused services because of my occupation. I think decriminalisation and strengthening Anti-Discrimination laws are the first step towards overcoming that stigma. Of course, there needs to be more community education to overcome stigma as well – maybe Respect could be funded to do some of that? They have really lived up to their name and I trust them to look out for all sex workers (and no – I don't work there!)

My third concern is that when we decriminalise sex work, it is important that we expunge the criminal records of people who have been charged with prostitution offences. Having those charges is stigmatising, but also can be really harmful for migrants to from Australia.

I have a friend who struggles with permanent residency/citizenship here because of past charges, and I can't imagine how hard it would be to get a visa for many overseas countries with a prostitution charge my record. So it would be great if we could give everyone a clean slate when we introduce decriminalisation, or at minimum allow people to apply for expungement -- like the Queensland government does for past charges or convictions of homosexuality (<https://www.qld.gov.au/law/crime-and-police/criminal-records-and-history-checks/expungement-of-historical-homosexual-convictions>).



There's probably more I can say, but they're my priorities, and I want to make sure I get this letter in before the deadline. Please don't listen to the crazy religious lobby that wants to impose their values on everyone else. Or give too much weight to the licensed brothel owners who have sadly already invested so much money in this failed licensing setup and will probably want to fight for the exclusivity it has bought them, at our cost! Please listen to the sex workers themselves – we are the ones 'with skin in the game'.

Sincerely,

