

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

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Committee Secretary
Housing, Big Build and Manufacturing Committee
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Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the Criminal Code (Decriminalising Sex Work) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024.

I congratulate the Queensland Government on progressing this important reform, necessary to repeal laws that undermine safety and reduce access to justice for sex workers in Queensland.

As a woman and member of the LGBTI communities I have met many sex workers and I am proud to support the decriminalisation of sex work as outlined in this Bill.

Sex workers have spoken out in the media to describe the criminalisation of their safety and how the current regulatory system (based on licensing) is not working to deliver workplace health and safety and industrial rights.

Considering the high levels of stigma, discrimination and vilification sex workers experience daily, speaking out in this way is to be commended. I support the balance of repealed sex work specific laws and new protections including a new attribute and removal of all legal discrimination.

When sex work is no longer treated as a crime and workplace health and safety guidelines apply, sex workers will finally have the same protections as other workers. Along with psychosocial protections, the provision of safe sex equipment will be required in workplaces, as personal protective equipment is in any industry.

Unfortunately, levels of misinformation about sex workers and their work will lead to uninformed discussions by submitters to this review and when it returns to Parliament. I hope care is shown for the members of the Queensland community that undertake this work and they are shown respect.

Decriminalisation, including anti-discrimination protections in this Bill will improve the disadvantage sex workers experience, as it has done in other locations.

As the brave women who addressed members of the Women's Safety Taskforce explained, sex workers' ability to report crime is reduced by the current laws. This reform will finally address findings of the Fitzgerald Report and send a clear message that police no longer have a regulatory role.

The amendment to ensure fair treatment by local governments is an important addition. It will be important that no future law or regulation prevents sex workers from working together for safety.

I ask that the Committee make a strong recommendation for this reform to commence on or before 1 July, 2024 to prevent any more sex workers experiencing criminal charges for choosing to work safely.

Yours faithfully

Faye Clark