

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

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Micah Projects' Submission to Housing, Big Build and Manufacturing Committee Inquiry on the Criminal Code (Decriminalising Sex Work) And Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

About Micah Projects

Micah Projects is a leader in community services with 28 years experience providing advocacy and support to some of the most vulnerable groups across Brisbane and Queensland. Micah Projects:

- Provides specialist homelessness services to individuals and families;
- Operates the Brisbane Domestic Violence Service supporting people experiencing domestic and family violence;
- Supports young pregnant and parenting women and their families through three Young Mothers for Young Women programs;
- Operates an inclusive health and wellness hub for people experiencing disadvantage;
- Provides integrated support to the tenants at Brisbane Common Ground Supportive Housing;
- Operates two social enterprise cafés; and
- Through Lotus Support Services is the leading supporter of Forgotten Australians and care leavers in Queensland.

Introduction

This year marks 35 years since Tony Fitzgerald QC handed down his report into corruption and recommended that sex work industry no longer be regulated by police. It is 25 years since the current regulatory model for sex work was introduced.

During this time we have seen Queensland's legislative and regulatory systems fail sex workers and Queensland through criminalisation, stigma and discrimination.

As such, Micah Projects support the Criminal Code (Decriminalising Sex Work) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024 as essential legislative reform:

- **to remove barriers to sex workers accessing housing and healthcare;**
- **to ensure sex worker workplace health, safety and rights; and**
- **to align Queensland with other jurisdictions that have modernised their sex work laws.**

Recommendations

- Part 1 - We recommend a commencement date of 1 July 2024. Any further delay leaves sex workers criminalised, with safety strategies criminalised and reduced access to justice.
- Part 2 - We support amendments to the Anti-Discrimination Act but recommend the removal of 'adult' from cl6.
- Parts 3 & 7 - We support laws to prevent local councils from banning sex work outright from their area. We recommend that sex workers are able to work together.
- Part 4 - We support repeal of Ch22A Criminal Code, including the laws that criminalise sex worker safety.
- Part 6 - We support amendment of the Liquor Act; however, we recommend a review of the Adult Entertainment laws and further removal of any regulatory role for the Queensland Police Service.
- Part 9 - We support review of the Act in 4-5 years in consultation with sex worker organisations.
- Part 10 - We support repeal of the Prostitution Act, including the licensing system, licensing body, and public health advertising.
- Part 11 - We support the amendment to other Acts but with social escort removed from the Child Employment Act as it has been from other Acts.
- We support the expungement of sex work offences as important to include in future legislation to prevent ongoing impacts on sex workers.
- We recommend that Respect Inc. is resourced to work with the Queensland Industrial Relations Commission to provide them with expert advice as they address workplace issues, to support an awareness program to address sex work stigma and inform sex workers about decriminalisation in line with QLRC Recommendation 38.

Conclusion

Micah Projects works to break down barriers that exclude people from housing, healthcare, employment, meaningful connections, and to give people a voice.

We support the *Decriminalising Sex Work Bill* ending the treatment of sex work as a criminal activity and treating sex work as work being regulated using existing systems, regulations and laws. The Bill will ensure equal treatment for sex workers including by accommodation providers and local Government bodies, and protect current and former sex workers, families and associates from discrimination or unfavourable treatment.

8 March 2024