

Standing Committee on Justice and Community Safety

GPO Box 1020, Canberra ACT 2601

Submission against prostitution

Dear Committee Members,

I wish to express my concern about the Canberra sex industry.

I am embarrassed that the Australian national capital has a sex industry. I have heard of a number of cases where visiting persons from overseas have only wanted to visit Fyshwick because of the sex industry. Jokes are made if one says 'I'm off to Fyshwick', hinting that the person might be going there for sex. What a sad indictment on the place, and a slur on all the reputable businesses.

I am very disappointed that prostitution has been made legal in the ACT. Prostitution is a disgrace and results in women being treated as objects rather than human beings. How can a woman's safety be guaranteed when the nature of sex normally means a one on one interlude in a separate location? ACT legislation should result in the protection of human rights, not go along with a system that threatens the human rights of women.

Legalising brothels increases supply of sex, and increases the demand for purchasing sex, rather than fostering a society which supports marriage as the best and safest place for sex to occur. Increasing demand for purchasing sex supports the illegal sex industry as well.

I support calls for the conduct of solid research into the actual impact the industry has on the girls and women trapped in the prostitution industry. The study should include rates of physical abuse, mental health problems, links to child abuse, drug addictions, criminal links, post-effects, health risks of clients, relationship impacts, socio-economic and geographical origins, as well as the impact on men and families. The results, I suspect, will lead to public support for changing the laws and making those seeking sex for payment guilty of an offence.

I strongly support the need for programs to assist prostitutes to leave the industry. I was shocked to hear that 'the average number of times a girl will try to leave the industry before actually getting out is seven, with many displaying signs not dissimilar to post-traumatic stress symptoms displayed by soldiers returning from battle'. If that is true, there is something dreadfully wrong.

I also support adoption by the ACT government of the "Swedish model" of prostitution. I see women in prostitution primarily as victims and wish to see those who purchase sex be prosecuted, thus cutting off the demand rather than the supplier. The Swedish model of prostitution supports that.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

Regards,

Thomas Bielenberg

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