

For immediate release, 4 June 2009

SA Sex Industry Network, a program of The AIDS Council of South Australia Inc.

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International Whores Day no bad whores, just bad laws!

As part of International Whores Day celebrations, Adelaide sex workers and their supporters' including other sex industry staff, health professionals, friends, family and clients of sex workers will take to the streets of Adelaide on Friday afternoon at peak hour with a message for the South Australian government – **no bad whores, just bad laws!**

"People are often shocked to find out that sex work is still criminalised in South Australia and any activity related to brothels is still completely illegal", said Ari Reid, Manager of the Sex Industry Network (SIN).

The laws pertaining to sex work in South Australia are contained in the Summary Offences Amendment Act (1953) and the Criminal Law Consolidation Act (1935). South Australian laws have not moved with the times and are more than 55 years old.

Criminalisation makes sex workers more vulnerable as victims of crime because they are seen as easy targets and less likely to complain to the police. While brothels are illegal, sex industry employers have no legal responsibility to comply with industrial relations legislation, or to provide a safe working environment for their employees. Criminalisation and criminal records create a barrier for those sex workers who may wish to exit the sex industry. Attempts to reduce demand by criminalising the clients of sex workers doesn't decrease supply but it does drive sex work activities underground, increasing the vulnerability of sex workers. Finally, criminalisation undermines health promotion work of agencies such as SIN, a health promotion project aimed at supporting the current high standards of sexual health amongst sex workers.

"Sex workers are citizens and residents and play a meaningful and important role in today's society. Sex workers are required to pay tax, are parents, home owners, students and more. Australian sex workers enjoy, on average, better sexual health than the general public and have achieved outstanding success in preventing the transmission of HIV in the Australian sex industry, with no known case transferred between sex worker and client in Australia, ever. This is not the case anywhere else in the world", said Ms Reid.

"Due to criminalisation, South Australian sex workers have safe sex equipment such as condoms seized by police and used against them as evidence of prostitution regularly. Obviously this contradicts public health messages regarding condom use and makes the distribution of condoms, lubricants, safe sex material and other health services difficult".

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“In other states of Australia, not only is sex work decriminalised, but some states have anti-discrimination legislation that protects sex workers from being discriminated against. The current legal status of sex workers in South Australia is not only out of date with the rest of Australia but is also not in line with current community attitudes”, said Ms Reid.

International Whores Day celebrates the birth of the sex worker rights movement. In Lyons France on June 2nd 1975, when sex workers staged a ‘church sit in’ to protest police brutality and the lack of police attention to crimes against sex workers. Soon community members joined sex workers and challenged the police to distinguish who is and who isn’t a sex worker, making it difficult for the police to make arrests. This is widely considered to be the birth of the sex workers rights movement.

So, dressed to impress and carrying red umbrellas that are used not only to shield them from the winter, but also as a universal symbol of sex worker rights, sex workers and others who support the human rights of sex workers will celebrate International Whores Day by drawing attention to the continued struggle of South Australian sex workers who are still fighting against discrimination, criminalisation and victimisation.

The South Australian Sex Industry Network (SIN) is a service by sex workers for sex workers. Our beginnings are with the Prostitutes Association of South Australia (PASA) which was founded in 1986 as a reaction to police harassment of sex workers in Adelaide brothels. PASA quickly became an active and vocal sex worker rights group advocating for progressive law reform and other issues aimed at improving sex workers' lives. A key issue impacting upon sex workers at this time was HIV and in 1989, PASA and the AIDS Council of South Australia (ACSA) began to work together to provide HIV/AIDS health promotion to the sex worker community.

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The AIDS Council of South Australia Inc.
Our vision is **A FUTURE FREE OF HIV**