



SEX WORK IS WORK

**ACT sex workers are calling for
full decriminalisation NOW!**



WHAT DOES DECRIMINALISATION ACTUALLY MEAN?

- **Full decriminalisation** means removing all laws that treat sex work differently from other jobs. This means getting rid of: criminal laws, special licensing systems, police powers and any other rules that treat sex workers, support staff, workplaces or clients differently from other workers and businesses.
- **This does NOT mean sex work becomes unregulated.** Instead, sex workers are covered by the same workplace, planning, tax, health and criminal laws as everyone else.
- **Full decriminalisation applies to ALL sex workers**, including migrant sex workers, street-based sex workers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sex workers, private (independent) sex workers, people who do sexual acts at work but don't see themselves as sex workers and includes anti-discrimination and anti-vilification protections.



FULL DECRIMINALISATION IS PROVEN TO:

- Increase access to criminal justice and civil legal systems.
- Allow sex workers to access healthcare, implement best practise PPE use and safer sex practises.
- Promote sex workers' safety, wellbeing and inclusion in society.

Decriminalisation doesn't increase or decrease numbers of sex workers or workplaces. Evidence from decriminalised jurisdictions shows no change in size after decriminalisation.

Decriminalisation doesn't result in exploitation.
Criminalised people have more barriers to ask for help.

INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR DECRIM

- UNAIDS
- The World Health Organisation
- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the United Nations Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls
- The International Labour Organisation (ILO)
- The Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)
- Amnesty International
- Human Rights Watch.



WHY WE WANT DECRIM

SAFETY AND JUSTICE

Sex worker workplace safety should be regulated fairly and transparently, with the same protections other workers enjoy. Instead, the ACT has a specialised WHS Code that is only relevant to workers in licensed venues. It is not fit for purpose and needs to be scrapped.

In reality, ACT sex workers outside of licensed brothels currently cannot access WHS protections.

Independent sex workers in the ACT are forced to choose between working safely, or working legally. No worker should be put in this situation.

All sex workers in the ACT should be covered by the same WHS laws that cover other workers.

BETTER HEALTH

Criminalisation, licensing and registration create barriers to health and wellbeing.

Sexual health is everybody's responsibility. Mandatory condom use laws are ineffective, unnecessary and unfair.

Supportive approaches; workplace health and safety, training and peer education, are proven to improve safety for workers in all industries. The existing outdated approach promotes harmful myths about sex workers as 'vectors of disease'.

Evidence shows the opposite: **in Australia, sex workers have lower rates of STIs and blood-borne viruses than the wider population, regardless of legal frameworks.**



WORKERS' RIGHTS

Criminalisation, licensing or 'registration' systems and special police powers create discrimination, contribute to misunderstanding and maintain stigma against sex workers.

This means we fear being arrested, ridiculed, penalised, not believed or stigmatised if we come forward to report assault, harassment, doxxing or a WHS breach.

Laws that ban sex work and restrict it to certain locations are a failure. They don't work, and make our work unsafe. **Criminal penalties criminalise sex workers' safety strategies.**

ACT SEX WORKERS ARE DEMANDING LEGISLATIVE REFORM:

- Repeal the Sex Work Act 1992.
- Repeal the Work Health and Safety (Sex Work Code of Practice) Approval 2023
- Introduce anti-discrimination and anti-vilification protections for ourselves and our families.
- Full decriminalisation for all sex workers, including street-based sex workers, workers of colour, people who use drugs, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sex workers, and trans and gender diverse sex workers.
- Allow independent sex workers to operate in pairs or small groups for safety.
- Destroy all government records of sole operator sex workers and expunge past convictions related to sex work.



REFORM REQUIRES UNITY

- **Federal, state and territory governments** must fund autonomous peer-led sex worker organisations to support sex workers, provide health and safety education, and empower our communities.
- **Federal, state and territory governments** must fund community legal centres to deliver projects that help sex workers access legal support.
- **Health, workers' rights, and family, domestic and sexual violence (FDSV) organisations** need to support decriminalisation, and commit to making their services accessible and culturally safe for sex workers.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Sex work is decriminalised in New South Wales, Victoria, the Northern Territory and Queensland. South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania still criminalise aspects of sex work.

The ACT has committed to progressing decriminalisation. Sex workers and allies are pushing to make it happen. Scarlet Alliance, SWOP ACT and Decrim ACT will keep fighting for full decriminalisation nationwide.





SEX WORK IS WORK

ACT sex workers deserve decriminalisation

