

My First Scarlet Alliance Forum

Scarlet Alliance is the peak national sex worker organisation in Australia. Last November I attended my first national Scarlet Alliance Forum in Sydney. RhED funded my attendance costs and I was joined by a fellow RhED volunteer and a RhED staff member. For me the forum was a political awakening. It was also the first time in my life I felt totally and truly accepted as a sex worker in such a large group. If our goal as sex workers is to be treated equally under the law, Scarlet Alliance taught me just how far we still have to go. It also became clear to me law reform can only happen if more sex workers take a stand and become activists. For me sex work is intensely personal, but it's

also powerfully political. We hear the media, journalists, academics, politicians and faith leaders debating the nature of our work. These debates often happen in our absence. Scarlet Alliance forums can help empower sex workers and equip them with the tools to enter a public debate on what remains a highly controversial area of public policy.

As a final thought, it dawned on me just how many male workers remain disengaged from sex work organisations. In my experience, the vast majority of men in the industry do not identify as sex workers. Scarlet Alliance's Forum got me thinking: how can we engage and support more of those men to be included?