

The Swedish Model

International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers 17th December

December 17th is the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers. The International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers began in response to The Hill Killer, Gary Ridway. In the 1980s and 1990s, Ridway is believed to have murdered 48 (or more) women in the USA. Most of the victims were sex workers.



Pic: Part of the mural at Talbot Reserve



Red is a color of beauty and an umbrella is a form of resistance. It symbolises protection from the abuse and discrimination faced by sex workers everywhere but it is also a symbol of strength. Continuing this tradition and in honour of all sex workers who dare to resist oppression everywhere, sex workers and their supporters from around the world adopt the red umbrella as a symbol of sex worker rights.

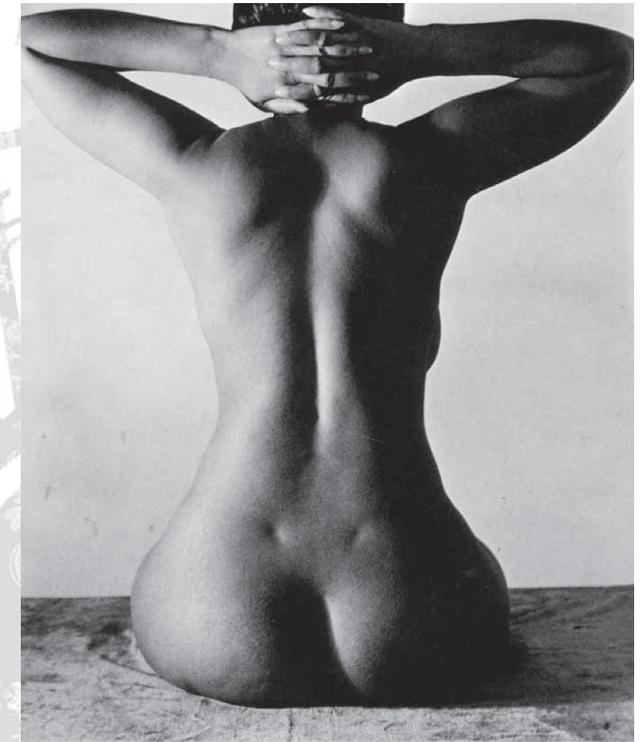
On 17th December, 2009, RhED, with the support of St Kilda Gatehouse and others, walked through the streets of St Kilda, creating a visual presence to remind the community that violence against sex workers does exist and is not tolerated. Guest speakers included Jelena Popovic, Deputy Chief Magistrate, Inspector Lisa Hardeman, St Kilda Police, and Sue White, General Manager, ISCHS.

Do you know what the "Swedish model" is?

It is important that everyone in the sex industry know about laws that came into Sweden in 1999. Currently, these laws are being promoted across the world.

In 1998, the Swedish Parliament passed a law banning the purchase, as well as the attempted purchase, of sexual services. The law came into force on 1 January, 1999. The law has gained much international attention and has been subject to much debate in Sweden as well as internationally. The Swedish government has promoted it to other countries as a solution to the "problem of prostitution".

In its law proposal of 1998, the Swedish government argued that it would be "wrong" to criminalise the "weaker party" in "prostitution" (sic). According to the Swedish government, there is no doubt that "prostitution" (sic) is "harmful" to society as well as individuals. However, if it is a criminal act to purchase a sexual service, then this law would send a moral message to the population who would then hopefully learn that "prostitution" (sic) is wrong.



Pic: Nude 1939, Imogen Cunningham

Besides making the clients the criminals, another part of the Swedish Model is the laws against procurement. The law makes it illegal to work indoors, work with others, to profit from the sexual labour of others, and to advertise. The aim of this legislation is to punish those exploiting or perpetrating "violence against women", rather than those who are seen as the "victim" whilst selling sexual services. The Swedish legislative view of sex work defines prostitution (sic) as "men's violence against women", and as an occupation that can never be voluntary.

The impact of the Swedish model is that in Sweden, the sex industry has gone underground in an effort to be undetected. Many supporters of the Swedish model of sex industry legislation state that it is a holistic response to the issues faced by sex workers in that country.

Yet, sex workers in Sweden disagree with this. The Sexworkers and Allies Network in Sweden (SANS) say that the laws have increased the risks and violence against sex workers. It has forced negotiations of sexual services to be rushed, forcing sex workers to work alone. It has increased the stigma relating to the sex industry. Sex workers in Sweden regularly visit the homes of clients or work in other areas that they are not familiar with. This places them at increased risk of danger. It has had the effect of making sex workers more fearful than before the legislation was introduced. Sex workers feel less inclined to report violent incidents in the workplace to police, for fear of being required to report their clients.

Criminalising people who buy a sexual service devalues and de-emphasises the experiences and issues of sex workers themselves. There are no services that offer harm minimisation, eg free



Pic: sex workers are safe sex professionals

The SHANTUSI study 'Surveying HIV and Need Throughout the Unregulated Sex Industry'

The SHANTUSI project began recruiting participants in August 2009. Its primary purpose is to test for HIV and see if workers engage in risky sexual behaviour in the unregulated sex industry. This means street-based sex

workers, those in illegal brothels and workers who contact clients via the internet but who are not regulated by any particular body.

However, the aims of the project are not just to test for HIV but also find out about workers' needs in the unregulated industry. This is what we most want to know at RhED. Already, 88 workers have told of working on the streets or at times when their safety has been at risk. Talking to workers has shown how common sexual and physical abuse is, as well as robbery and harassment. Despite these risks, many enter this industry as a moral choice to avoid meeting one's needs by stealing or hurting others – despite how desperate some workers are. Few would climb into strangers' cars in the dark of night for sex if it did not help meet their need in some way. The only way services such as RhED can meet the needs of workers is for workers to tell us what these are. We can then use this information to adapt the service to better meet these needs while advocating for change to current laws. It is hoped that when SHANTUSI finishes in mid 2010, we will have information that can be used to force such change.

*** We particularly need participants who advertise sexual services over the internet and migrant workers in unregulated brothels for forthcoming interviews.
If you are able to help, please call RhED on 1800 458 752.**

condoms and health checks to sex workers. The Swedish model stigmatises sex work and sex workers; it sees sex workers as victims rather than valid workers. Sex workers in Sweden may be disempowered and disenfranchised due to the criminalised nature of their industry. This may result in poor health outcomes for sex workers, their clients and the general community.

So when you hear people talking about the Swedish model, you might like to inform them that the abolitionist approach to sex work does not consider harm reduction, public health interests and does not promote the human rights of sex workers or their clients.

This is an edited version from the Briefing Paper – the Sweden Model of Sex Work Legislation written by Christian Vega. If you would like a full copy of the Briefing Paper with references, please contact Christian Vega on 1800 458 752 or cvega@ischs.org.au

How the Swedish Model backfired on a client: (NZ Herald Sep 2009)

In Oslo, a 28 year old Norwegian man was fined after he complained to police that he had been cheated by a sex worker. Station Chief Kurt Pettersen told the Norwegian newspaper Nordlys that the man had given partial payment to a Russian prostitute in the northern city of Tromsøe. But she left with the cash when they failed to agree on a final price.

Pettersen says "he contacted the police because he felt he did not get the services he paid for". However, instead of the police upholding the man's complaints, the man has been fined 8,000 kroner (NZ\$1,900). He is the first person in northern Norway's Troms Province charged under a new law forbidding the purchase of sexual services, reports Nordlys.

And another one ...

In Stockholm, two tennis players are suspected of breaking Sweden's sex law by allegedly soliciting sex workers ahead of the Stockholm Open, police said on Monday.

The two men, identified only as foreign citizens, were detained as they entered a hotel in Stockholm early on Sunday with their escorts, investigation leader Jonas Trolle told The Associated Press.

He said both players were set to compete in the tournament, which started on Monday.

Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet later reported that both were tennis players but only one was competing in the Stockholm Open.

Trolle said a prosecutor in the case had issued a so-called summary punishment, which allows someone suspected of a minor offence to avoid a trial by signing a confession. It wasn't immediately clear whether the players had signed the document. Sweden's sex work law is highly unusual because it punishes those who pay for sex but not the sex workers.

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2009/10/20/1255891802223.html>

Moving on... Pilot Project – Pathways to Exit Program

Two new positions are being created in the RhED Program to work with people who are leaving the sex industry.

Two case workers will be employed on a one year pilot program to provide support to workers leaving the industry from both the regulated and the unregulated industry.

The sex industry is highly professional. Sex workers who leave the industry have transferable skills that they can continue to use in new careers.

Sometimes sex workers choose to leave the sex industry for a variety of reasons. Workers in all professions change careers throughout their lives – now more than ever. Because of the stigma and discrimination that you may have experienced, sometimes it may seem harder to leave this industry than for example, a call centre, a law firm, a plumbing company, etc.

In a Victorian study, *Sex workers working within a*

legalised industry: their side of the story, 2006, some of the barriers to leaving the industry included:

- No qualifications, education too expensive
- Not being able to earn enough in legitimate industry
- Flexible working hours
- Student with a mortgage
- Financial goal not yet made
- Making the transition with no support
- Explaining the missing years
- Money vs age

There are ways of developing resumes that explain the "missing" years.

The Pathways to Exit Program is an opportunity to support workers who are choosing to move on from the industry.

If that is you, telephone RhED on 1800 458 752.

From the Director, Dr Claire Noone, Director, Consumer Affairs Victoria

The regulation of sexual service providers and, particularly, enforcement of the law against brothels trading without licences, is a priority for the Victorian Government.

Consumer Affairs Victoria administers the *Prostitution Control Act (PCA) 1994*, which aims to minimise harms associated with sex work.

Consumer Affairs Victoria has designed a newsletter that has been distributed to brothel managers. It informs on regulation and provides practical advice on how to make sure your business complies with the law. The newsletter features:

- ✓ an overview of the Victorian licensed sexual service provider industry
- ✓ important information about Consumer Affairs Victoria's brothel inspection program
- ✓ tips on the legal advertising of your business in Victoria
- ✓ examples of enforcement against illegal operators

Please telephone RhED 1800 458 752 if you would like a copy of this resource.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship - Visa Verification

On brothel outreach, RhED workers are often asked "how do we check whether a person's passport has the correct visa to allow that person to work in Australia"?

The following information is about a service called Visa Entitlement Verification Online (VEVO) for organisations.

VEVO is a free online facility that allows organisations to check the visa entitlements of a visa holder.

The most common users of the system are employers and labour supply companies to confirm a visa holder's entitlement to work in Australia.

To use VEVO, you need to contact them at http://www.immi.gov.au/e_visavevo.htm

Employers Immigration Hotline

Use this number, as an employer, to check the meaning of work condition codes.

This service will not give specific information as it relates to a client, it will only be able to provide assistance in understanding work condition codes as they relate to employing a visa holder. This service also assists employers to understand their obligations under the Employer Sanctions Legislation.

Telephone: 1800 040 070