

International Whores Day

2nd June 2009



The origin of International Whores Day began in France in 1975. In Lyon, France, on June 2, 1975, a group of sex workers took over a church and staged a sit in over a number of days. The action was in protest against the increasing number of arrests of street sex workers, police harassment of them and the lack of interest shown by the police in solving murders and other crimes committed against them.

After a week, it had reached a stage where the police threatened to remove the children from homes of the protesters if they did not leave the church.

In a surprising move of community solidarity, one account tells that the women of Lyon were outraged and joined the prostitutes in the church. They sent a message to the police; if you're going to remove the children of the whores, you're going to have to take all of the children because how are you going to tell the difference between one mother to the next. The protest ended in violence when the police entered the church with a baton raid.

This action inspired the sex worker movement throughout the world, and encouraged more sex worker programs and organisations to start up.

This year, RhED celebrated IWD by inviting sex workers to 10

Inkerman St. We decorated the front of house area, covering the windows with positive sex work messages RhED was fortunate to have Kate Holden, author of *In My Skin* and Scarlet Alliance President, Elena Jeffreys as guests.

As part of International Whores Day, which began over police discrimination, sex workers from around the country have participated in marches, dinners and demonstrations.

In an opinion piece for ABC News Online, Scarlet Alliance president Elena Jeffreys said discrimination is still a part of life for sex workers, even when it comes to the mundane – like getting insurance or home loans. Ms Jeffreys says sex workers are often refused loans and other financial services all because of their chosen profession. "Discrimination comes from financial institutions. Sex workers who can demonstrate their income and applying for loans or insurance are discriminated against by lenders and insurance agencies who want to charge us more or just simply refuse our loans on the basis of our occupation," she said. "This discrimination is unacceptable and sex workers are demanding that it ends."

IWD is an annual event that raises the community's consciousness over discrimination that sex workers face. It was a fun evening catching up with familiar friends and new faces.