

Starting Out: Brothel Work



RhED

1800 458 752

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Welcome to the Victorian sex industry!

This information is for people who are interested in, or currently working as full-service sex workers within a brothel setting.

Full-service sex work (FSSW) generally refers to a sex worker who has sex in-person with their client (commonly covered genital/penetrative sex). A brothel is an in-house business where clients come to visit sex workers on premises.

RhED would like to thank the sex workers that participated in the development of this resource and shared their insight and knowledge.

We acknowledge that not everyone's experience is going to be the same. If you need more information than this fact sheet provides, please call us, email or arrange an appointment for free confidential support.

BEFORE YOU START

When starting in any new industry it's important to think about your goals and expectations. Within the sex industry it's important to also gain a clear understanding of what your personal boundaries and limits are.

Here are some pointers from other sex workers to consider when starting out:

- An understanding that your physical and mental health and safety is the most important consideration in any decision you make.
- Any job has specialised skills and knowledge. For sex work, an understanding of STIs and transmission, strong communication and negotiation skills, and an awareness of the different terminology within sex work is important to the job.
- Clear boundaries are important in this industry and you have the right to choose what you will and will not do with your body. After gaining an understanding of the different types of services and ways of working within the industry, consider what services fit within your comfortable boundaries and capabilities (both physical and mental).
- Do you prefer working by yourself or do you prefer the company of other workers? Unlike a brothel setting, independent workers usually work alone or in the company of only one other person, so it's important to think about what type of workplace suits you best.
- It's important to acknowledge that there is no guarantee you will make a lot of money. Consider what your financial needs are, what your spending budget is, and how you feel comfortable to market yourself to ensure you can make your desired amount of income. For example, what skills could you use to build rapport with your clients so that they become repeat customers and a regular income?

Which brothel should I work at?

As a sex worker in a brothel you are considered self-employed. This means you make the choice of which establishment you want to work at and that you're interviewing the brothel just as much as they are interviewing you.

In Victoria, there are around 86 licensed brothels you can choose to work from, and many more in the unlicensed sector. It's important to mention that most brothels are catered to cis women, and trans women who have had gender affirming surgery. There are also a select few brothels who cater to all transgender women of any age: Club Pleasure, and Venus Babes.

If you are non-binary or a trans man there may be more options for working in a brothel setting if you are open to working as a gender you don't identify with. If you are a cis man or a trans person wanting to work as a man, there are currently no brothels in Victoria that employ male sex workers, though there are other sex-on-premises saunas that may provide you a closer experience to in-house work.

Please note that as a sex worker you do not legally have to tell anyone you are transgender. Victorian laws protect you from discrimination on the basis of your gender identity. It's advised to make your own safety judgements about how and when you disclose your status. Victorian laws also protect you from discrimination on the basis of your sexual orientation and there are services available if you'd like to speak to someone about this. Contact RhED on **1800 458 752** or at **sexworker@sexworker.org.au** for more information.

When you're looking for a brothel suited to you, we recommend contacting them to let them know you're interested and to organise a visit as a starting point. This will allow you to get a feel for the place, and to speak with the manager as well as maybe meeting some of the other workers.

Do you prefer dayshift or nightshift?

Most brothels offer either a dayshift or a nightshift. Consider which option fits best with your lifestyle and check that the brothel you choose has capacity to give you shifts that suit your lifestyle.

How far are you willing to travel for work?

While working close to home may be an attractive option, make sure to consider how you might feel if you ran into someone you know. If you're not comfortable with this, it might be worth choosing a brothel in a location away from your home.

How long are shifts?

Brothel shifts are usually anywhere between 8-12 hours. Check with the manager beforehand to make sure you both understand each other's expectations.

What services does the brothel expect you to provide?

A standard full-service usually consists of a massage, protected oral (on the client) and full sex (covered genital sex/penetrative sex) until the client comes or the session is over. Check with your chosen brothel to double check their service expectations and if you are comfortable with this.

Is it acceptable to negotiate extras?

Extras are add-on services that you negotiate directly with your client outside of the brothel standard service. Unlike the standard service, you set your own prices and decide what extras you will do, and the full amount of money goes to you. We will discuss extras in more detail in another section.

Remember that every brothel and every brothel manager is different so remember you don't need to bend your boundaries. Take your time and find one that feels right for you.

Is the brothel a licensed venue?

Following the passing of the Sex Work Decriminalisation Act 2022, brothels will be able to apply for liquor licences. This means in the future, some brothels will serve alcohol while others will not. Consider whether you are more comfortable working somewhere that serves alcohol, and maybe attracts clients looking to party, or somewhere without alcohol, that might attract clients looking for a quieter time.

What to expect on a standard shift

Each brothel will have a different vibe and may operate slightly differently, but in general you can expect the following from a standard brothel shift:

Most workers come in to get ready for work at the brothel – hair, makeup, outfit. Brothels have specific rooms for workers to get ready in which include mirrors, lockers etc. You'll need to bring your own things to get ready with i.e. makeup/hair straightener and looking after your property on-shift is entirely your responsibility. Ask the manager on shift about accessing locker rooms.

Tea and coffee (and often basic food, like bread for toast) is available for workers on shift.

Most brothels have a strict no-tolerance drug policy.

A shift is usually anywhere between 8-12 hours and will be a mix of down time and/or back-to-back bookings. In the downtime most brothels have a 'backroom' where you can read or study or chat with other workers. On a nightshift some brothels turn into more of a 'party' vibe and workers are often expected to stay out and work the loungeroom.

On nightshift many clients will have just come from the pub/footy/party atmosphere and the skill is in securing the booking and getting them into a room, rather than letting the 'party' continue in the shared spaces of the brothel. On day shift it's usually more of a chill vibe (clients from tradie or office jobs on lunch breaks and older clientele). Dayshift and nightshift are often very contrasting and it's important to work out which you prefer and what fits with your lifestyle and needs.

Breaks aren't structured in brothels and you will run your own time. You can take toilet, smoke, tea breaks whenever you like as long as you don't miss introductions with clients (unless you specifically let your manager know you're going on lunch or dinner break). Good communication with managers will help avoid any misunderstandings.

Some brothels do private introductions (which is the more common practice in Victoria), while others have a lounge area for meeting and discussing services with clients. When a client comes in, they will either be taken into a separate room, or you will be expected to go up to them and introduce yourself in the lounge area. If a client picks you, the booking is paid for at reception/via the manager and you will usually be given your cut of the money then (however some managers will offer to hold your money till the end of the night). You will be assigned a room, which is yours for the duration of the booking. In a brothel all rooms are considered in use when the door is shut, so if this is the case make sure you knock loudly on the door before you enter! If you have negotiated extras with your client, make sure they pay you at the beginning of the booking, in the booking room.

Before the service, you'll perform a quick health check on your client, which involves checking for visible signs of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) (see below for more detailed information). This is followed by the client showering and then the service you have agreed on can begin.

Intros

Introductions (commonly referred to as "intros") are an opportunity for workers to briefly introduce themselves to a potential client (usually anywhere between 30 seconds to 2 minutes and tell the client the type of service that they provide, including any extras and prices.

Each worker has a different style or persona they use in introduction and with time you will work out what works best for you. Remember, it is most important to ensure you clearly communicate your service to the client, and try to get a good understanding of what they are looking for in the booking.

As a rule it's always good to be relaxed, professional, warm and friendly in your intro. Make eye contact with the client, you may even choose to touch the client on the arm or leg. Remember the client is not allowed to touch you during intro.

The Service

The general industry-standard for full-service in a brothel includes an intimate massage on the client, protected oral on the client and protected genital/penetrative intercourse. Some brothels will also offer clients a deluxe service at a higher cost. There is no standard for a deluxe booking and each worker will cater it to their own preferences e.g. it might include kissing or mutual oral. Deluxe package offers are sometimes a way of brothels limiting workers to be able to charge their own rates for extras and keep 100% of the money. Keep in mind that if you're working at a brothel that offers deluxe packages, you are still in control of the decision making. For example, you could offer kissing as your deluxe package offer and then any other add-ons are classified as extras that you negotiate in private with your client.

Standard Brothel Booking Times

15 or 20 minutes (only available at some brothels and on day shift)

30 minutes

45 minutes (only available at some brothels).

60 minutes

The standard industry split of money is 40% to the brothel and 60% to the worker. Any establishment taking a bigger cut might be worth rethinking.

Extras

Extras are negotiated between you and the client and includes anything beyond the standard service. You don't have to agree to anything outside of the standard service, but if you do choose to offer your own package, or to negotiate a client's desire then you set your prices. Note: this is separate and private from the brothel and you keep all of the money. Extras are usually mentioned in the intro. Any money for the extras is then collected in the room and always before commencing the booking.

STI Testing

Following passing of the Sex Work Decriminalisation Act 2022, there is no legal requirement for mandatory STI screening in Victoria to be eligible to work in a brothel. While no legal requirement exists, brothel managers may decide that proof of quarterly attendance for STI screening is a condition of employment at their venue. You should decide what works best for you when choosing whether or not to work somewhere that enforces mandatory STI testing.

Sex workers have always been leaders in sexual health and are safer sex professionals. It is important for you to discuss with your GP or sexual health nurse, how frequently you should attend for STI testing. If you work frequently, you might decide to get tested more often than a worker who is only on shift once a month. For more information about STIs and STI testing, get in touch with RhED on **1800 458 752** or at sexworker@sexworker.org.au.

Performing a client health check

Checking your clients for visible signs of STIs is a standard part of the professional service you provide, and the client should expect this; if not then this is an opportunity to educate them.

Once the client enters the room and before the service begins is the time to mention you need to do a standard health check on them. Each worker has a different way of going about this (some may opt for a sexy-nurse like health check, others may be more clinical). With experience you will work out the ways that feel most comfortable for you.

Remember: If you are unsure about your client's health check, you can ask another worker (if available) for their opinion. If you see something you are concerned about, you are within your rights to terminate the booking and recommend that the client visits a clinic for tests and treatment before they come back.

How to preform a health check:

Where to look:

- Lift the client's penis or check between vaginal lips and have a good look around the genital area.
- Lift the testicles and pull back the foreskin to check for discharge.
- Look between the area of the anus and penis/vagina.
- Around the anal area.
- Through the pubic hair.

What to look for:

- Sores, blisters, rashes, and warts.
- Itching, redness, swollen glands, unpleasant odour.
- Discharge.
- Pubic lice.
- Look over the mouth and lips for blisters and sores, especially if you are going to kiss your client.

Note: Pre-cum can look normal but it may still be infectious. Some STIs have no visible symptoms which is why sex workers always use protection.

Urinating can clear away a penile discharge and it can be some time before it is visible again.

Once you are satisfied with your client's health check, you can direct them to have a shower before the service commences. Brothels will have a shower in each room, and it is standard practice for a client to shower (without you) before a booking and they should expect it.

If you don't want to lose the booking, you could offer another type of service such as a hand job, mutual masturbation or an erotic act while they masturbate themselves.

See the Scarlet Alliance Red Book for a comprehensive list of STIs: redbook.scarletalliance.org.au

Party Bookings

If you are working nightshifts, particularly on the weekends and near to the CBD, some clients might be on a night out and consuming drugs and/or alcohol. It is not uncommon for some clients to seek out workers who will take drugs with them during their booking. This is against the policies of most brothels, so clients will often be discreet and ask in the intro whether you 'party,' as a way to ask whether you are someone who takes drugs with clients. This is good to be aware of so you don't misinterpret what the client is asking and potentially end up in a booking you don't feel comfortable in.

When considering whether you want to do party bookings, there are a few things to think about.

- Are you someone who is an experienced drug user? Do you know how different drugs affect you, and in what quantities?
- If you are someone who already uses drugs, you might decide you will take your own drugs with the client rather than have some of theirs.
- Consider how different drugs will affect both yourself and your client. Maybe you will feel comfortable with clients taking certain drugs but not others. You might feel the same way about yourself.
- If management were to find out you were consuming drugs with a client, how would they react?
- Will consuming drugs with a client impact on your inhibitions, safety, and decision making?

See RhED's [party bookings resource](#) for more information or get in touch with RhED on 1800 458 752 or at sexworker@sexworker.org.au if you'd like to discuss further.

[Harm Reduction Victoria](#) have great resources on different types of drugs and their effects.

How to end the service

In a brothel, each room has a phone or intercom leading to reception. You can call if you need assistance or are having issues with a client, or if you're feeling uncomfortable, just walk out and leave the room. Each room in a brothel also has a buzzer and workers will be notified by reception buzzing your room when it's time to wrap up your booking. This takes the pressure off from workers having to keep time in a booking.

Note: Lots of workers also choose to keep their own time (such as using the alarm in your mobile) to notify you five minutes or so before the booking ends to give yourself time to get the client up, dressed and out the door on time. On busy shifts, sometimes reception might forget to buzz you, which is another reason why workers might choose to keep their own time. You will work out which ways work best for you as you get used to the rhythm of bookings.

How you end a service is important and it may be the difference between a client turning into a regular or not. Staying friendly right up until they leave the room and ending with a line that may encourage them to return i.e. "I really enjoyed our time together" can leave your client feeling special and encourage them to become a regular. It can be comforting to know going into a shift that you already have one or two bookings secured, which is why many workers choose to have regular clients. It is important to be vigilant and maintain strong boundaries even with regular clients who you might feel comfortable with.

Ugly Mugs

A client who is disrespectful, dangerous or commits an offence against a sex worker is called an Ugly Mug.

This can be; physical violence, sexual assault (including removal of condom without consent, known as stealthing), abusive behaviour—for example calling you insulting names, yelling, making threats, making harassing phone calls, forcing you to do something you don't want to do, non-payment of service etc.

The RhED Ugly Mugs program aims to alert sex workers of dangerous clients to prevent further violence and harassment. We provide a confidential, non-judgmental and supportive reporting system for sex workers. You can call us to talk about it.

An Ugly Mug report is completed by RhED which details information about the incident and the Ugly Mug.

Published warnings are sent to Victorian brothels, escort agencies and workers who wish to receive this information via SMS or email. The information does not identify brothels, agencies or workers but is used to ALERT OTHER WORKERS so that they can be aware of potential safety issues.

Your name or any other identifying detail will not be published.

If you choose to report it to the police we can support you. We can provide confidential interpreters at no cost to you.

Contact RhED for more information:

1800 458 752
sexworker@sexworker.org.au

Sleeping at a brothel

Some brothels allow workers to sleep overnight. If you choose to do this, remember to also make sure you get outdoors for fresh air, as well as getting enough sleep and 'you time'. Your emotional and mental health play a big part in your potential to earn money. If you are tired or agitated due to a lack of sleep or not enough 'you time', this might affect your ability to connect with a client and get a booking. Alternatively, if you are tired, you may not be 'on your game' and this may place you at risk of not reading a potentially dangerous client, or lowering your boundaries.

Common terminology used in the sex industry

Oral Sex/French	Protected sexual contact between the mouth and the genitals or anus.
\$ BBBJ (bareback blow job)	Performing unprotected oral sex on a client (consider increased risk of STIs).
Full Service	Service including sexual intercourse (a full service booking generally includes a massage, oral sex on client, and covered genital/penetrative intercourse until the client comes or their session is over).
Hand Relief	Hand stimulation of client's genitals until orgasm, (this is a common way to end a booking in a massage-only parlour).
** Rub n tug	Hand relief after a massage.
** Happy Ending / HJ	Hand relief after a massage.
\$ Natural	Sex without a condom (consider increased risk of STIs).
Massage	Touching and rubbing the client's body (usually with your hands).
** \$ Body Slide	Massage where sex worker slides their naked body up and down the client's body.
\$ Kissing	Generally, mouth to mouth contact.
\$ DFK (Deep French Kissing)	Open mouth kissing, including tongue.
\$ Strip	Erotic dance while removing clothes.
\$ Anal/Greek/A-Levels	Protected sexual contact between the mouth and the genitals or anus.
\$ GFE/BFE (girlfriend or boyfriend experience)	GFE or BFE usually refers to a more intimate type of service that involves more connection between the client and worker, and is less transactional or clinical. It might mean more kissing, cuddling, talking etc. Note: this does not include unprotected sex.
\$ PSE (porn star experience)	PSE offers clients the opportunity to play out fantasies often seen in porn. This might include acts such as dirty talk, spanking, gagging/deep throating, anal, swallowing ejaculate etc. Note: Activities are always pre-communicated and agreed on between the worker and client.
\$ Reverse oral/mutual oral	Oral sex that the client performs on the worker.
\$ Double	Client books two sex workers who both focus on the client, but aren't intimate with each other.
\$ Bi (bisexual) double	Client books two sex workers who are also intimate with each other as well as the client (resembles a threesome).
\$ BDSM	Bondage and Discipline, Dominance & Submission, Sadism and Masochism.
\$ Costumes/role play	Worker wears a costume and roleplays a character e.g. a nurse or a personal trainer.
\$ Italian	Rubbing genitals (usually a penis) between buttocks.
\$ Mutual French / 69	Worker and client perform oral sex on each other at the same time.
\$ Rimming	Licking the anus (with protection).
\$ Spanish / boob job	Rubbing genitals (usually a penis) between workers breasts.
\$ Toy show	Worker uses sex toys (e.g. vibrator) to masturbate themselves in front of client.
\$ Golden Shower	Client watches worker urinate, or one person urinates on the other.

\$ - Services that you can choose to do and charge the client your own rate directly as an extra.

****** - Usually specific to massage-only parlours

Visas

As long as you have the ability to work in Australia on your visa, it is legal to sex work in Victoria. If you need support with migration law, Department of Immigration and Citizenship or anything related to your visa, contact RhED directly.

Tips From Sex Workers

What can I say if they don't want to use a condom?

If you have a pushy client who doesn't want to use protection, consider some of the following solutions: If they argue they don't want to, or it doesn't feel as good:

- Try swapping who wears protection i.e. female condoms
- Suggest another activity such as Spanish sex (between the breasts) or hand relief with lubricant.
- Tell them any of assertively you never have unsafe sex and I am not going to start now.
- Ask them how they'd feel if all your clients were requesting this? Remind them it's for their own protection as well as your own
- Tell them they might think they don't like protected sex, but they've never tried it with you!
- Offer different styles of condoms (they all feel different – contact RhED for more information).
- Tell them you only enjoy sex with respectful people

Other assorted tips from sex workers

- Have friends outside of the industry as well as in the industry.
- Clients are paying for a service, not for your love or friendship. It is important to keep your personal life separate from your professional life. Some clients enjoy the thrill of finding out personal details of sex workers, and can use them against them. Be mindful of how much you want to tell them. Many workers make up pseudo life stories while they're in the industry.
- This is your business, plan how it will work. Your body is your business, look after it.
- Be wary of who you choose to trust. People may take advantage of you, especially when they know how you are making your money.
- You choose how to spend your money.
- Do pelvic floor exercises.

Should I douche?

Douching is flushing the vagina or anus out with a fluid, usually water. For people with a vagina, the short answer is no. The vagina is a self-cleansing mechanism and douching is not recommended as it gets rid of the healthy bacteria that naturally occurs in the vagina. Anal douching can interfere with the natural function of the bowel. While douching cleans out the rectum, it also flushes out the mucus layers that lubricate and protect the rectal/gut wall. With these protective layers gone, the douche fluid disrupts the lining of the intestinal walls leaving the rectum more vulnerable to infections such as HIV and other STIs.



Remember

Sex work is real work. You are working in a legitimate industry in Victoria. You have the same human rights as anyone else.

Wellbeing

The benefits of exercise and enough rest are self-evident, though sometime difficult to achieve, especially with the irregular hours that come with working in the sex industry. The secret seems to be choosing a form of exercise which you enjoy. This will in turn improve your quality of sleep.

Have you thought about who you are going to tell?

It's important to have people that you can talk with about your experiences in the sex industry. However, it can also sometimes be important to get away from your work completely and be in a space where no one knows what you do for a living. Consider who you may and who you may not tell and how you believe they will react. Contact RhED if you'd like any tips or support.

If you don't think you'll stay in the industry forever, do you have a plan for life after sex work?

Due to stigma and structural discrimination, some sex workers have reported difficulty moving on from sex work. Issues they have experienced include a lack of options, gaps in work history and difficulty in finding an alternative that offers the same flexibility or income. This is perpetuated by the stigma of sex work, and lack of understanding of transferrable skills sex work provides. RhED has a program called Pathways designed to help workers navigate these issues.

Information about how RhED can support you

RhED is a sex worker program in Victoria, supporting current and former sex workers. RhED is a program of Star Health and is staffed by people who have worked, or are working in the industry, and allies.

RhED maintains strict confidentiality and privacy around all issues and contacts with sex workers.

RhED provide:

Health education, information, support, referrals to sex worker-friendly services (such as accountants, GPs and counsellors) and advocacy to people who work in the sex industry. We do this by telephone, outreach and email.

Professional development workshops to sex workers who are starting out in the industry, working in the industry and just wanting to refresh skills. Some of our topics include working with disability, tax and finance, BDSM and kink, STIs and sexual health knowledge. If you have an idea for a workshop you'd like to see please reach out and let us know!

A free industry **magazine (RED)** twice yearly. This is circulated to all brothels and individuals who wish to subscribe. Subscription is free and if you would like to receive copies, please forward your name and postal address. Your name can be "The Occupier" and the magazine is delivered in a plain envelope.

A social group called **Red Rendezvous** meets on the last Wednesday of the month. Email and SMS reminders are sent the week prior. If you would like to be part of this, let us know. Usually 2-3 people turn up and often these are new workers, current workers or people who have left the industry and use it as a way of staying connected.

A weekly drop-in space called Hustling to Health (H2H). This runs from 5:00pm - 9:00pm every Friday at 36 Greeves Street, St Kilda. Here workers can connect, get support, free dinner, shower, tea, coffee, clothing and safer sex/NSP supplies.

A weekly drop-in space at **St Kilda Gatehouse** on a Wednesday between 12pm - 5pm for workers to grab supplies, ask for referrals and information, or just have a chat.

An **Ugly Mug** reporting system. This is for reporting and warning system about dangerous, violent or nuisance clients or sex workers in Victoria. If you have any further questions, feel free to give us a call on 1800 458 752.