

Trafficking in Australia; “Vigilante approach is wrong, Prevention is key.” Say Sex Workers

Written by Scarlet Alliance

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Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association, in partnership with sex worker organisations in Australia and Asia, have been working on migrant sex worker rights and trafficking policy issues trans-nationally for over 22 years.

“In our experience, hysteria doesn’t build better policy.” Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association President Elena Jeffreys asserted today. “Policing approaches are a short term impact, prevention approaches provide long term sustainable outcomes for those involved. Policy and responses must also be built on evidence – not hysteria.”

New laws on sex worker migration and trafficking-like conditions were introduced to Australia in 2000 and updated in 2005. Unfortunately, the laws were a response to trafficking hysteria, and did not use expert advice from sex workers or human rights specialists. Australia must learn from past experience and not allow the evidence to be drowned under speculation and sensationalism.

“Australia’s anti-trafficking laws have resulted in thousands of raids, resources devoted to surveillance and investigations, but have found very little evidence of trafficking,” Elena Jeffreys, President of Scarlet Alliance said today. “The Police found what sex workers always knew; trafficking-like work conditions in Australia are rare. All evidence and research backs up this conclusion.”

“Vigilante action against migrant sex workers’ workplaces is not the way to assist anyone,” Elena Jeffreys added. “Let the courts decide based on actual evidence with any cases in Australia.”

The laws that criminalise aspects of sex work have been recognised as an ineffective way to improve work conditions for migrant sex workers in Australia. Prevention is the only approach that works.

“Prevention includes better access to visas, improved methods of migration, removing barriers to independent travel and migration, and providing information about the laws and human rights in Australia,” Elena Jeffreys concluded today. “Access to visas will prevent trafficking-like

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situations. A witch hunt will not.”

“Sex workers, including migrant sex workers are not calling for stronger laws, it is those that have an agenda who are doing so, and that agenda is not the prevention of trafficking.”