



**Adrian Pederick MP**  
Member for Hammond

**House of Assembly**  
**20<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

Statutes Amendment (Decriminalisation of Sex Work) Bill

**Mr PEDERICK ( Hammond ) ( 16:27 ):** I rise to speak to the Statutes Amendment (Decriminalisation of Sex Work) Bill. I commend the speech that the member for Hartley has just delivered. Certainly, as the representative for the seat of Hammond, I will not be supporting this bill because I believe, too, that if the decriminalisation of prostitution happened it would break down society as we know it. I have been lobbied far and wide and by a lot of my local people, including my local churches and other groups.

In the context of the bill, I want to refer to some notes from Ngaire Button, Deputy Mayor of Christchurch, New Zealand, who has issued a blunt warning to South Australians, especially in respect of members of this house who are debating this bill. The deputy mayor indicated that Christchurch has been going through tough times since the huge earthquakes wrecked the central business district. New Zealand's Prostitution Reform Act 2003, which is basically the same as Steph Key's Sex Work Reform Bill, has only added to the city's problems, including financial problems. Ms Button spoke to Family Voice Australia leaders who were visiting Christchurch last week. She said:

It's really hard to get somebody that's employed to do traffic enforcement and enforce conditions on resource and building consents to go out and do enforcements around brothel compliance. It's a specialised skill. What we've found is that this whole thing has taken up so many resources. And who's paying? The ratepayer!

This (South Australian) bill will have an impact on rates, on the efficiency of how cities run, because it is staff time and not police time. The sex industry...because it is so fraught with so many criminal facets, it really is a law and order issue, not a local government issue. A parking officer who enters a brothel wouldn't necessarily know what to look out for.

Our staff have spent hours, weeks, months, over the last few years trying to manage prostitution in the city. We had 300 submissions from various groups in the city about signage. We had a big stack of submissions,

hundreds—asking us not to allow brothels in their area. We can't do anything about street prostitution.

The street walkers fight about possession. They yell at each other across the road and argue, make a racket, and the cars are stopping...and there's the mess in people's yards, because there are no toilets. So they've been using people's yards as toilets. Then there's the condoms and needles and other things in people's front yards and around the property and on the streets. And husbands being solicited in their driveway as they come home from work.

Pimping has been an issue too. A council colleague has been to Manchester Street to talk to some of the girls. There are guys behind them with baseball bats. The exploitation has caused great problems with drug addiction.

Ngaire Button also indicated that the Christchurch council has tried to limit the placement of brothels, but was taken to court by a man who owned three brothels. The council lost the case. She said, 'It cost ratepayers \$100,000. It's put a huge burden on us to manage brothels within the city.' She also indicated that she was not aware of any prostitute murders before the sex industry was decriminalised in 2003, but since that time three Christchurch sex workers have been murdered, yet the law was supposed to make it safer.

I think just this one case of what is happening in Christchurch, New Zealand indicates how wrong it is to decriminalise this industry. In putting the onus of control back on local government, which is already overstretched, especially with a lot of functions that have been passed their way from state governments in the past, you have parking inspectors and other council inspectors having to take over the role of the local police force essentially. It becomes a local government matter and then it becomes a ratepayer matter. As we have seen in this case, when there was a contest about where brothels could be located, it cost the council \$100,000. This just should not happen.

From what was indicated in that submission, you can just imagine the problems with the street walkers accessing people's homes and yards, and the lack of control that people have on where these brothels will be located. They could be right next door or right next to the school that your children go to.

I will refer to a few quotes from a joint submission from Abolish Prostitution Now, Nordic Model Australia Coalition, Collective Shout, Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Australia, Amnesty members against the decriminalisation of pimps and punters, Adopt Nordic WA and SPACE International. In their submission they say that they are writing to

make us all aware that the proposal in this legislation is actually a strategy to deregulate the sex industry. They say:

Pimps and other prostitution entrepreneurs stand to profit from the deregulation of their market sector, which will allow them to expand and diversify their businesses in an environment of lax regulation.

Survivors of prostitution in Australia—

who are members of some of these organisations I quoted earlier—

oppose any further deregulation of the sex industry . Their experience of the Australian sex industry has been one of violence, degradation, intimidation and harassment. Pimps and sex industry customers already enjoy high levels of impunity in their sexual use and abuse of women through prostitution businesses in Australia, and any proposal to legislatively guarantee the privacy of their activities further threaten those who are sold in the sex industry.

The submission also states that it is the wish of these organisations that:

People in prostitution should attract no legal penalty, and laws punishing these people should be removed from the South Australian statutes. However, these laws can be removed without any need to decriminalise pimps and sex industry customers. People who financially and sexually profit from the prostitution of others should continue to be criminalised. Their actions inflict harm on individuals, as well as society at large.

It is interesting that across the world a number of governments have removed laws against people in prostitution while still retaining criminal sanctions against pimps and sex industry customers. These include Sweden, South Korea, Norway, Iceland, Canada and Northern Ireland. In their submission, this group encourages our parliament:

to alternatively investigate the examples set by these governments in implementing what is known as the 'Nordic model' of legislation.

It is to be noted that:

The NSW government deregulated that state's sex industry in the 1990s, and the results of this laissez faire prostitution environment in metropolitan Sydney were recorded in a report published in 2012. These results included the following:

identification of 400 premises that were 'probably brothels' in Sydney's greater metropolitan area alone (and this number does not include escort agencies, street prostitution or strip clubs)

'A realistic estimate of numbers of sex workers working within 20 kilometres of Sydney's CBD within any one year might...[be] between 3,000 and 4,500. It is also known that there are a number of brothels operating in Western and South-Western Sydney and some NSW regional centres...numbers in these locations add...one or two thousand to the annual total'

'Two thirds...of the sex workers...were from Asian...or other non-English speaking countries...and nearly half...rated their English skills as 'Fair' or 'Poor'

'11% of the Asian women...reported that they were unhappy about being involved in sex work'

'8% of...participants reported being assaulted by clients, 10% threatened by clients, and a third...reported being pressured by a client to do something they didn't want to do'

I think this shows that decriminalising prostitution does not work. It has not worked in making prostitutes safer under the police who have been conducting oversight of brothels in the situation that already exists in South Australia.

Certainly, in light of all the information that has been given to me, and in my representation of my seat of Hammond, I will not be supporting the bill.