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Re: Support for Statutes Amendment (Decriminalisation of Sex Work) Bill 2015

We write this letter to affirm our support the Statutes Amendment (Decriminalisation of Sex Work) Bill 2015, and urge you to support this Bill in the House of Assembly without amendments.

We are a collective group of South Australian women's organisations, namely **YWCA Adelaide, Women Lawyers Association of SA, Zonta SA, BPW SA, Soroptimist International SA, and the Working Women's Centre SA**. We support the overwhelming evidence in support of the full decriminalisation of adult consensual sex work as the best means to safeguard the health, safety, human rights and workplace rights of sex workers.

We note that in 2016 the NSW Government affirmed their continued support for full decriminalisation as the best way of protecting sex workers and maintaining a more transparent sex work industry. Furthermore, both the New Zealand and NSW experience demonstrates that rates of sex work have *not* increased, but that decriminalisation did improve sex workers' human rights; removed police corruption; resulted in savings in the criminal justice system; and enhanced the surveillance, health promotion, and safety of the sex industry.¹

We understand this bill will be voted on as a conscience vote, however, this vote must be informed by the evidence, and it is critical we listen to the experts - including international health and human rights organisations, UN bodies, and sex workers themselves with lived experience – who support the decriminalisation model proposed in the bill.

We also express concern that amendments to criminalise certain aspects of sex work will result in the most marginalised groups being forced into dangerous and isolated environments, and unable to report abuse or exploitation. It is imperative that sex work is fully decriminalised to ensure the safety of all sex workers.

The South Australian government has committed to addressing violence against women, through the National Plan, and the Women's Safety Strategy 'A Right to Safety'. We also note that in the South Australian Government's Women's Policy 'Achieving Women's Equality', one of the pillars of action is 'Improving women's safety and wellbeing'.² As the majority of sex workers are women, decriminalising sex work in South Australia will contribute to ensuring all women are safe and free from violence.

Thank you for your support in this critical area of law reform. Please do not hesitate to contact us with any questions.

Yours sincerely,

YWCA Adelaide
Women Lawyers Association of SA
Zonta South Australia
BPW South Australia
Soroptimist International South Australia
Working Women's Centre SA

¹ The Sex Industry in New South Wales: a Report to the NSW Ministry of Health. Sydney: Kirby Institute, University of New South Wales (2012) <https://kirby.unsw.edu.au/sites/default/files/hiv/attachment/NSWSexIndustryReportV4.pdf>

² Office for Women, 'Achieving Women's Equality' <http://www.officeforwomen.sa.gov.au/womens-policy/achieving-womens-equality>