



COALITION AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN AUSTRALIA

MEDIA RELEASE

CATWA Slams New Sex Work Amendment Bill as “Massaging the Sordid Reality” of Prostitution and Trafficking

The Victorian government must respond to the recent rash of reporting on sex trafficking in Melbourne by ending the charade of legalised “sex work”, now publicly exposed as a form of slavery, according to the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Australia (CATWA).

CATWA recommends the adoption of the Nordic Model, which criminalises the buying of sexual services and offers support and exit programs to all women in the sex industry. This model is recognised internationally as the most effective program for combating sex trafficking.

Recent reports from Nick McKenzie, Maris Beck (*The Age*) and Sally Neighbour (*Four Corners*) have highlighted that a modern form of slavery is alive and well in Melbourne’s suburbs, exposing sex trafficking as a reality in Victoria’s system of legalised prostitution.

These reports have exposed the fact that trafficking is not simply migration for labour by another name. Women trafficked into legal brothels in Melbourne, mostly from Asia, are held in debt bondage for six months or more. They have no freedom of movement and are controlled by intimidation, coercion and violence.

CATWA founder, Professor Sheila Jeffreys, contends that trafficking is a standard form of recruitment for both legal and illegal sectors of the sex industry in Australia. “It is naive to believe that you can have a legal system of prostitution in which trafficking does not take place”, she says. “Especially in light of this brave reporting from *The Age* and the ABC.”

CATWA hopes the recent media attention surrounding the issue of sex slavery will shock Australians out of their complacency regarding the sex industry and force an indifferent government and police force into action.

Unfortunately, the proposed changes in the Sex Work and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2011, which is now before the Victorian Parliament, are unlikely to meaningfully improve the situation for trafficked women. The Bill seeks to, yet again, apply cosmetic changes to the original legislation while maintaining a system of prostitution that benefits the burgeoning sex industry and buyers of prostituted women.

Without addressing the demand for prostitution and trafficked women, in particular the demand from Australian men for Asian women, these legislative changes will be ineffective. “They simply massage the sordid reality of an industry based on the exploitation and degradation of women” says Professor Jeffreys.

CATWA continues to campaign against all forms of sexual exploitation of women, especially the violence of prostitution, trafficking and pornography.

Links: <http://www.catwa.org.au> and <http://www.catwinternational.org>