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## MEDIA RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 28/11/2019

### Re: Review into Decriminalisation of Sex Work

Appointing Fiona Patten to lead the Victorian Government's welcome [review of the state's system of legalised brothel prostitution](#) threatens to undermine the credibility and integrity of the process before it has even begun.

While CATWA commends the Victorian Government for launching a review into the broken system of legalised brothel prostitution in Victoria, Patten's appointment represents a clear conflict of interest towards sex industry businesses and owners. It is impossible to see how the voices of marginalised populations will be properly heard when this review is led by someone with clear links to organisations that have a vested interest in deregulation.

CATWA is concerned that:

- Ms Patten's founding of the Sex Party (now Reason Party) had [direct links to the Eros Association](#), a leading sex industry business lobby group.
- The Government states Patten is a ["tireless advocate for sex worker rights"](#), yet the Eros Association is a [sex industry business organisation](#), not a workers' union.
- As leader of the Reason Party, Ms Patten has continued to call for the deregulation of the industry, which is likely to financially benefit sex industry business owners.

We also note that the government's release does not mention [sex trade survivors](#) at any point, despite them being key stakeholders. Survivors of the sex industry can be seen as whistle-blowers with regard to the harms of the industry and failings of existing legislation.

Sex buyers are also absent in the government's release, despite being [key perpetrators of violence against women in the sex industry](#). This oversight is particularly glaring, given that the review was announced during the United Nations [16 Days of Activism to End Gender-Based Violence](#).

[Police](#) and [service providers](#) have highlighted failings of the current legalised brothel system in Victoria. It is a system beset by issues of physical and sexual violence, sham contracting and trafficking, which is why a review is long overdue.

We are calling for the immediate removal of Ms Patten as the Chair of this review, in order for the relevant processes to have any hope of providing a balanced assessment.

*The Coalition Against Trafficking in Women Australia (CATWA) is the Australian branch of CATW International, a Non-Governmental Organisation that has Category II consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council. It works locally and internationally to end all forms of sexual exploitation of women, especially in relation to issues of prostitution and trafficking in women.*