

**Elena Jeffreys, President of Scarlet Alliance, speaking on behalf of Scarlet Alliance on the 'Power' panel of Sydney's F Conference, 10am, 11 April 2010, Teachers Federation Building, Surry Hills, Sydney, New South Wales, Australia.**

I would like to recognise the position of privilege I occupy as a spokesperson on sex worker issues in this conference. I don't have the capacity to speak on behalf of the individual experiences of each of the sex workers here, but instead will represent the sex worker community in totality, with deep respect to you all.

Scarlet Alliance is 21 years old in 2010.

Staff, volunteers and elected representatives are sex workers; in order to lead, volunteer and work in a sex worker organisation you need skills that are garnered only through direct experience of sex work. Our national membership includes sex worker rights organisations, group and networks from all over Australia, each with their own histories and autonomous structures.

Some of these sex worker organisations in Australia are funded; they employ sex workers as peer educators to do outreach to brothels, private sex workers and street based sex workers, as well as creating safe drop in spaces, run community education, social and political events, and more. In total funded sex worker organisations in Australia conduct 20,000 "occasions of service" a year. This is policy jargon that means that funded peer educators in Australia interact with individual sex workers about 20,000 times in a year, each interaction is quantified into statistics and trends which fit into the 20 year history of our movement.

The qualitative aspect of this organising happens in local steering committees, state-based and national e-lists, evaluations, consultations, a large national sex worker only conference that happens once a year, called our "National Forum," and research projects. This is how we come to having political positions that are based on firm and irrefutable evidence, drawn from our entire national sex worker community through processes that are self-determined, community driven, autonomous and authentic.

Sex worker voices are organised and political, and we know what we want, need and deserve from the systems of representative democracy, judiciary, health, immigration and economics in Australia. I say this without conditions - and with the full support of the sex worker communities in Australia - we want an end to the discrimination that we face within these systems.

Sex workers demand decriminalisation of all sex work, anti-discrimination protections, an end to mandatory testing, and fairer immigration for sex workers travelling from developing countries, particularly Asia and the Pacific.

In ACT, Northern Territory, Victoria and Queensland we demand the repeal of licensing laws, an end to the registration of individual sex workers and ending mandatory health testing.

In Western Australia and South Australia we demand the repeal the laws from early last century that criminalise most sex work activities including associating together in public spaces, including licensed bars, on the street and when working and in pairs, co-ops or brothels.

In Tasmania we also demand the decriminalisation or working on co-ops and brothels.

In NSW we demand anti-discrimination laws and stronger leadership from the local councils who govern the planning regulations for all workplaces; private sex workers, brothels, strip clubs and co-ops. Tasmania, ACT and Queensland already have anti-discrimination laws which are being enthusiastically tested by sex workers determined to assert their rights against large institutions that discriminate against us, mostly for profit through inflated advertising prices.

We recognise that these institutional changes will not deliver liberation for sex workers in Australia – however the struggle, political organising, leadership, mentoring, rallies, meetings, publications, agitation and experience of campaigning together, along with utilising the tools law reform can give us, will.

In our industry every single benefit we have has been won through long hard struggles.

And every single oppression we face is a part of the whorephobic, anti-sex, abelist, anti-drug use, racist, sexist, trans-phobic, species-ist, size-ist, colonialist, English-speaking, war-mongering society that we live in.

But there is one extreme oppression that we face that cannot be attributed to the military industrial complex - the oppression that anti-sex work feminisms have fraught upon our workplaces.

Namely anti-sex work feminists have chosen to campaign against our workplaces, lobby for the criminalisation of sex workers and our clients, applaud the closure of services that support us, rally to imprison the migrants among us, stigmatise every aspect of our work, discredit our political organising, undermine our demands, belittle our leadership and pathologise us through unethical and harmful research.

In the 1970's sex workers and feminists had a political allegiance at a time that both were fighting against laws that predominantly targeted women. At that time sex workers had an overtly victim narrative in public space, and no wonder, though on the cusp of law reform we were still paying off police through money or sex, often daily, in order to avoid arrest. With law reform has come a new set of experiences – it is rare for sex workers of my generation to experience daily police harassment unless we are of backgrounds that authority still love to hate – namely trans\*, street based, indigenous or Asian migrants.

With new found freedoms the sex worker rights movement also found a new voice in Australian politics. Our movement no longer plays the victim of the patriarchy for the convenience of the anti-sex work feminist movement and instead has found a feminism of our own – which encompasses the sex worker only space, peer-to-peer support, discussions, political organising, class, gender and race analysis that

are in development but emerging as a new destination on the feminist landscape; albeit under construction.

For those of you non-sex workers confused about the role of sex workers in feminism – listen to us. We know what we want and we don't want you to campaign against us. For those of you non-sex workers who are as impassioned as we are about our rights – listen to us. Support our autonomous organising and be a friend in our journey.

Our politics is changing and we in turn are changing the feminist movement. The anti-sex work rhetoric of yesterday harmed our cause and demeaned our political organising.

The pro-sex worker feminist rhetoric of tomorrow is going to build us a new future and we are excited to be here to share it with you.

For those sex workers here today in the audience, who are currently working or who have worked in the industry, who are or who are not yet engaged in the sex worker rights movement, I hope the movement is doing you some justice, and that you will consider joining or renewing your membership to your national political organising body.

Thank you