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WHY DON'T WE INTRODUCE MEDIA & RESEARCHERS TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN TRAFFICKED?

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Human rights are the first consideration of a prevention approach to trafficking.

- **Mentioning specific trafficking cases in the media or research informs the alleged traffickers, families of victims, and authorities of the informant's identity.**
- **The Australian Guidelines for NGO's Working With Trafficked People recommends "Staff and volunteers at NGOs must avoid... exposing a person to danger by breaching their privacy." (page 10).ⁱ**
- **Scarlet Alliance is committed to not discussing details of particular trafficking cases in the media or with researchers.**
- **There are very few cases of trafficking in Australia. Any information, no matter how obscure it seems, will potentially expose the individual identity of sex workers involved in the case. General location, the detention centre or police station involved, persons' age or what country they are from, their skills/educational background or gender, the year or month when the individual sought assistance or travelled, the services that they accessed, regional accent or dialect of people involved, number of children they have, their age, religion, gender, their visa or relationship status. Any of this information could potentially disclose a persons identity.**
- **The Australian Institute of Criminology recognises: "The anti-trafficking response is relatively new, so the number of cases that have been identified... is still fairly small. It can be difficult or even impossible to de-identify information or draw trends from such a small sample."ⁱⁱ**

Migrant Sex Workers are often misrepresented in trafficking media coverage and trafficking research.

Migrant Sex Workers come to Australia to work, and do not wish to be exposed to 'authorities' while here. They have good reason to be suspicious of immigration authorities and police and consider sex work in Australia a reliable means to earn an income.

Migrant Sex Workers are more likely to be on 'contract' in Australia if they have not had access to a visa therefore more likely to witness trafficking-like situations.ⁱⁱⁱ

Migrant Sex Workers are targeted by police, immigration and law enforcement because they are the living evidence of crimes committed under anti-trafficking and sex slavery laws in Australia for arranging contracts for sex worker migration.

Migrant Sex Workers have a right to privacy. Becoming a witness in a sexual slavery or trafficking case is a challenging undertaking and has **huge ramifications on individuals' lives.**

Migrant Sex Workers leaving a trafficking-like situation are of interest numerous Government Agencies, face becoming a trafficking-witness, and are making decisions about immigration, the legal system, navigating welfare services and facing repercussions from friends and family as their privacy is challenged. Speaking to the media is not a priority or need for migrant sex workers during this time.

Migrant sex workers do not wish to be interviewed by journalists or researchers.

- The Australian Guidelines for NGO's Working With Trafficked People recommends: "avoid re-traumatising a person through inappropriate or unnecessary questioning." (pg 10)
- Scarlet Alliance complies to these guidelines by not exposing individual migrant sex workers indiscriminately to journalists or researchers from outside sex worker organisations.
- Sex workers who come to their local sex worker organisation after having left a trafficking-like situations are making complex decisions about their immediate and long term future; engaging with police, their embassy, future sex work, contacting family, and facing all of the repercussions of becoming a witness to a trafficking case. They are taking control of their lives.
- By contrast, media in Australia has a reputation among the sex worker community for being sensationalist, inaccurate, exploitative and/or unsympathetic to confidentiality or disclosure issues, and to almost always portray migrant sex workers as victims.
- When a sex worker comes to us for support, they are seeking practical help, they are not seeking to engage with media or research interviews and risk re-traumatisation from insensitive questioning, breaches of confidentiality or having their identity accidentally or deliberately exposed through media or researcher interactions.

Migrant sex workers deserve, at minimum, basic human rights. In 2009 this is lacking in Australia. Exposure of individuals in the media has not helped this cause.

- Scarlet Alliance does not introduce journalists or researchers to migrant sex workers who have experienced trafficking-like situations, and we do this as part of a harm reduction and human rights approach to trafficking.
- The Australian Guidelines for NGO's Working With Trafficked People recommends: "NGOs should not pressure trafficking victims to participate in interviews with journalists or researchers." (pg 20)
- Sex worker organisations and individual migrant sex workers have had negative interactions with media in recent years. Confidentiality has been breached and lives have been shattered as people's identity has been disclosed without consent across newspapers, radio and television.
- The media is an important avenue for creating change for migrant sex workers in Australia. However the media obsession with stories of victimhood, at the detriment of representation of other stories, means that migrant sex workers experience pressure to tell a 'victim' story to media and researchers, and sometimes to welfare and support services, in order to be listened to or receive the support and human rights they deserve.

ⁱ **Guidelines for NGO's Working With Trafficked, Working Group of the National Roundtable on People Trafficking, 2007 http://www.scarletalliance.org.au/library/ag_09/**

ⁱⁱ **Fiona David, Trafficking of women for sexual purposes, Research and Public Policy Series No. 95, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2008, pg iii. <http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/rpp/95/>**

ⁱⁱⁱ **Elena Jeffreys, Anti-Trafficking Measures and Migrant Sex Workers in Australia, Intersections, ANU, #19, Feb 2009, <http://intersections.anu.edu.au/issue19/jeffreys.htm>**