



JOINT STATEMENT: Friday, 13th September 2019

Vixen Collective (Victoria's peer only sex worker organisation) & Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association

INACCURATE LEGAL INFORMATION IN VICTORIA RISKS SEX WORKERS' SAFETY

Accurate legal information for sex workers is critical in Victoria given the complicated nature of Victorian sex work regulation, comprising more than 250 pages of laws and regulations.

Inaccurate, misleading or incomplete legal information can lead to sex workers acting in contravention of Victorian law, leading to potential police attention, arrest, charges, prosecution, jail, criminal records, and even deportation. In cases where inaccurate information makes it appear laws are harsher than they actually are, this may provide a basis for clients or other parties to attempt acts of extortion against sex workers – which may be successful where workers are unfamiliar with the actual provisions of Victorian law.

In the first week of July this year, a group called 'Sex Work Law Reform Victoria' (SWLRV) published a 'law guide' online that contained inaccurate information in relation to sex work laws in Victoria.

The local sex industry health service RhED provided translation services for this 'law guide' (for the 'law guide' to be translated into Chinese, Korean, Thai and Vietnamese), promoted the 'law guide' on social media and are directly distributing the 'law guide'.

As indicated above, distributing and promoting inaccurate legal information places sex workers at risk and is not acceptable.

Who is SWLRV? - In mid-2018 Star Health (who are the organisation who manages RhED's funding) was party to the decision to set up SWLRV, including the decision that SWLRV would be "supported by RhED" and that "there will be two agencies, RhED and Sex Work Law Reform Victoria, advocating with the same voice".

Given Star Health's role in the creation and ongoing running of SWLRV (through RhED), we call on them to take action remove the 'law guide' as a matter of urgency and to institute policy that prevents incidents that risk community safety in this way in future.

We note that neither RhED or SWLRV are recognised by Scarlet Alliance (Australian Sex Workers Association), the national peak body for sex workers in Australia, as organisations that represent the interests of sex workers.

Peer sex worker organisations, for example Vixen Collective, which is the recognised representative body for sex workers in Victoria, when posting legal information on our websites have the information fact-checked and will work with local community legal services. This is subsequent to a robust resource development process involving: community consultation, needs assessment, content development, focus testing, fact-checking, peer review, etc. Processes that involve community in resource development ensure that resources meet community needs, that content and delivery makes resources accessible, and work in partnership with legal professionals ensures accuracy that is critical for community safety.

For information on the laws relating to sex work in Victoria please refer below:

Scarlet Alliance (for state by state laws)

<http://www.scarletalliance.org.au/laws/>

Victorian info - <http://www.scarletalliance.org.au/laws/vic/>

Vixen Collective

Legal Info - <http://vixencollective.net/legal/>

Latest Legal Info - <http://vixencollective.net/legal/latest-legal-info/>

Resources - <http://vixencollective.net/resources/>

For information on other state and territory-based peer sex worker organisations, refer here:

<http://vixencollective.net/links/>

We would also note that this incident is another example of why the full decriminalisation of sex work is necessary, as the complexity of the licensing system in Victoria is an enduring risk to sex workers, reduces willingness of members of our community to report to Victoria Police when we are victims of crime, and compounds stigma and discrimination against sex workers.

For more information on Vixen Collective's campaign for the full decriminalisation of sex work in Victoria see here:

<http://vixencollective.net/campaigns/decrim-now/>

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