

Campaign Oct 1981

# Red light district row hots up

The Darlinghurst Residents' Rights Group has again called for the setting up of a red light district and the tightening of the Offences in Public Places Act to prevent prostitutes soliciting on the streets.

The group was set up earlier this year by some residents who were worried about the growing numbers of prostitutes plying their trade in the Liverpool Street, Green Park area.

In a submission made to the NSW Government, the group said that after Wran set up the Juvenile Crime squad in March, there was a marked decrease in prostitutes in the area, but "now they have returned with a vengeance.

"Child prostitutes have supposedly moved from the area but the number of prostitutes working the streets has continued to increase. We had thought the numbers would decline during the cold months. They have not, so what will the influx be like next summer," the submission said.

The group claims male and female prostitutes regularly ply their trade on the streets, in Green Park, in parked cars and in back alleys and that the resultant vice, noise and violence is making life unbearable for local residents.

The submission argues that prostitution, which has always been in the suburb, should be classed as a commercial activity, and that a red light district should be established in a commercially zoned district. The residents would benefit and the Government would be able to control sex-



*Carmen, who has earned the enmity of the Resident's Group by defending the rights of girls to work on the streets.*

has not seen the residents' submission but a spokesman for the Premier said he hasn't changed his mind.

A spokesperson for the residents' group, Mr Doug Norman, said: "While Mr Wran claimed a red light district would degrade

illegal. He said, and the groups' submission argues, that the influx of prostitutes is due to the lack of powers by the police to stop the activity.

Police claim they have no powers under the Offences in Public Places Act to stop prostitution on the streets. The Attorney General, Mr Walker, denies this and other people have claimed the police are deliberately not taking action to try to force the Government to give them back similar powers to those they had under the old Summary Offences Act.

Earlier this year, as a result of similar complaints about child prostitutes in the area, Mr Wran ordered a police clean-up job to be spearheaded by a special Juvenile Abuse Squad. Police activities resulted in many complaints by gays, aborigines and others that police were harassing them rather than concentrating on prostitution.

Among the reports of harassment were several from homosexuals who were picked up and held overnight by police under the Intoxicated Persons Act. Several of these people laid complaints with the Ombudsman, Mr Masterman, who said the complaints were still being investigated by the Internal Affairs Branch of the police and he had to wait until they passed the results back to him. He said that unfortunately his powers of investigation were totally inadequate in cases involving the police. When he received their report he could do no more than hand it onto the complaints for comment.

Gay groups believe any increase of police power, ostensibly to handle such things as