

McGinty still open to Swedish model sex laws

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Attorney-General Jim McGinty has agreed to an ongoing Health Department review of the so-called Swedish model for prostitution which makes it a crime to purchase sex services.

He said yesterday he would introduce legislation this week to legalise brothels in WA but indicated he had not closed the door on the Swedish model pushed by MPs from both sides.

"What we want to see is this distasteful but very real industry properly regulated," Mr McGinty said. "At the moment, now that the police have stopped their containment policy, there is no regulation of brothels."

He was happy to look at the so-called Swedish model to see if it worked but the advice so far was it drove prostitution underground.

But one of the MPs who provided that advice to Mr McGinty, the Greens Giz Watson, a member of the working party which produced the report that forms the basis of the Government's legislation, conceded yesterday that her group never visited Sweden and did not speak to anyone with first-hand knowledge of the Swedish system.

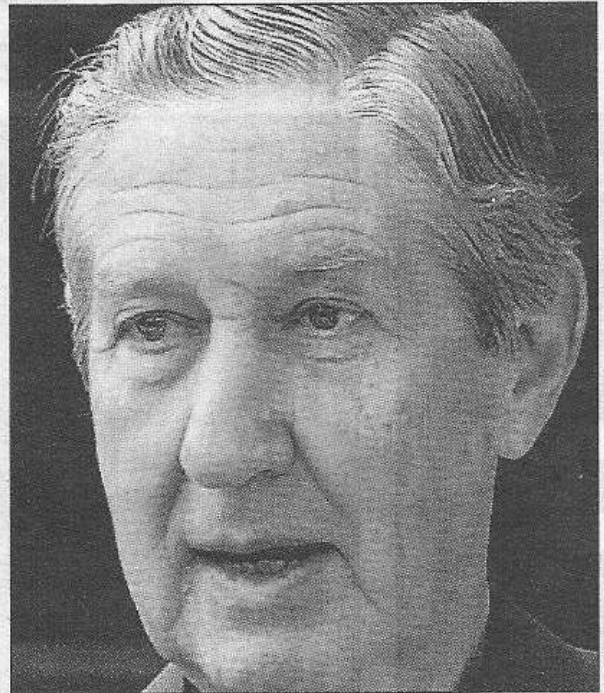
Instead, the group relied on a report presented to the New Zealand Government prior to that country adopting a similar model as that proposed for WA.

Labor MP Dianne Guise said yesterday she had an assurance from Mr McGinty that an assessment of the Swedish model would be part of the review of the legislation.

"There is some argy bargy in terms of the evidence that's been presented for and against and none of it in my opinion is as up to date as it should be," she said.

Perth's Catholic Archbishop Barry Hickey, who has urged MPs to reject the Government's legislation, also came out strongly in favour of the Swedish model.

"Compared with its neighbours and



Archbishop Barry Hickey

most other European nations, Sweden has virtually no trafficking of foreign women for sexual purposes," Archbishop Hickey said.

"Sweden's police not only administer the law, but are enthusiastic supporters because they find that it helps them to deal with all sex crimes and to virtually eliminate the organised crime elements that plague prostitution."

But Mr McGinty said the WA legislation had many benefits.

"It deals with the issue of police corruption not enforcing the law as it stands, it improves public health by dealing with sexually transmittable infections and it also offers greater prohibitions on children being in any way associated with the industry," he said.

The Government legislation is expected to hand planning approval for brothels to local governments.

Under the Swedish model of laws the purchase of sex and brothel ownership have been made illegal rather than prostitution itself. Politicians from both sides of Parliament are pushing to make the purchase of sex a crime rather than support legalisation of brothels.