



## Scarlet Alliance Media Release

### **SCARLET ALLIANCE SLAMS WA HEALTH MINISTER OVER SEX WORK PROJECT**

Scarlet Alliance the national forum for sex worker organisations & projects is outraged by the announcement of the withdrawal of funding for member organisation Phoenix by the Western Australian health minister Bob Kucera.

Cheryl Matthews Scarlet Alliance Executive member said:

"Health Minister Bob Kucera clearly does not grasp the basic concepts of health promotion that have enabled Australia to lead the world in HIV education and prevention with sex workers. Phoenix has played a critical role in stemming the tide of HIV by utilising best practice models of prevention including methods that have been enthusiastically embraced by Western Australian sex workers. Phoenix' use of materials that clearly express sex industry attitudes about sex work are essential elements in supporting safe sex to occur in commercial sex environments. Sadly, Mr Kucera has cynically referred to such project materials as 'glamorising' sex work. This is nothing more than a capitulation to the moral minority who are more interested in policing sexual behaviour than promoting health.

If Australia did not enjoy the excellent work of sex work projects such as Phoenix the HIV pandemic, that grips much of the rest of the world, would be far worse here. In Australia to date there has been no documented instance of HIV transmission in a sex industry context. Materials produced by Phoenix are entirely in line with the guidelines of both Scarlet Alliance and Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO). Similar materials are produced by similar sex work organisations in every State and Territory and are fully supported by local Health Departments."

Scarlet Alliance spokesperson Jenni Gamble added:

"Mr Kucera has been dilatory in his role as Health Minister by undermining hard fought public health campaigns that protect the entire Australian community. He obviously hasn't understood the National and State HIV Strategies that outline international best practice for HIV prevention. The Strategies urge community organisations to embed HIV education within the broader contexts of people's lives. In the case of prevention for sex workers this means that organisations need acknowledge that sex work **is** a form of labour and educational materials must reflect this reality in detail. The opinions of a misguided minority of people outside of the sex industry should not be used to undermine key health strategies developed by sex work projects like Phoenix. Mr Kucera's background in Police Enforcement has perhaps not afforded him sufficient experience in health promotion strategies to make a fully informed decision about the best kind of programs for sex workers."

Media Contacts

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