



Media Release

Women's Forum Australia Condemns Prostitution Vote in W.A

All women are the losers with the passage of a bill to expand the prostitution industry in the West. The Government's prostitution bill, passed by one vote in the Legislative Council tonight, paves the way for even more harm to be done to women, by creating a culture damaging to the wellbeing of all women.

At a time when other countries are introducing the 'Swedish model' which penalises the male buyer of women for sex as a way of reducing prostitution and trafficking, the W.A Labor Government goes ahead and expands the industry with no penalty for men who see women's bodies as merchandise to be bought and sold.

In 1999 the Swedish Government became the first in the world to prosecute the buyer of sex while legally treating the woman as a victim. A number of other countries have recognised the benefits of an approach which reduces prostitution and trafficking.

An industry based on the degradation of women's bodies should not have been given Government sanction. The legislation works in favor of men who recruit women into prostitution. It does away with the crime of being a pimp and living off the earnings of prostitution. Pimps are now given the sanitized title of 'Sexual services business manager'.

Governments should be concerned with creating a society that promotes mutual respect and human flourishing. Prostitution fuels trafficking in women for sexual slavery and pornography.

Research demonstrates that it is primarily women made vulnerable by poverty and economic inequality who end up in the sex industry. Women abused as children, women from dysfunctional families and women who have spent years in institutions often end up in prostitution.

Shelley Archer, who had the balance of power vote in the Legislative Council, claims to have secured funding for indigenous women's health programs in return for her vote. We hope she got a really big amount, because there will be more women needing help now.

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