

Media Release

The Hon Melissa Horne MP

Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation

Minister for Ports and Freight

Minister for Fishing and Boating



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MAKING SEX WORK SAFE WORK

Sex work will be decriminalised in Victoria, ensuring sex workers have access to the same rights as any other Victorian employee, regardless of who they work for – themselves, a small employer, or a large company.

Decriminalisation recognises that sex work is legitimate work and should be regulated through standard business laws, like all other industries in the state.

A range of reforms will be implemented over the next two years to increase safety, reduce stigma and improve access to government health and justice services.

The current sex work regulatory system – which has not been updated for close to three decades – is out-of-date and no longer fit-for-purpose.

Sex workers report current working conditions as unsafe in both the licensed and unlicensed sectors, including violence in the workplace, deterrents to reporting violence, and a lack of compliance with safe-sex measures.

In 2019, the Andrews Labor Government appointed Member for Northern Metropolitan Region Fiona Patten to lead a targeted review of sex work regulation and how to best decriminalise the industry.

After considering the recommendations from Ms Patten's review, the Government will:

- remove offences and criminal penalties for consensual sex work and repealing public health offences
- repeal the *Sex Work Act 1994* to instead regulate sex work through existing government agencies and business regulation
- update and modernise planning, public health and anti-discrimination laws to support a decriminalised system.

Only sex work between consenting adults will be decriminalised. Criminal offences to protect children and workers from coercion and address other forms of non-consensual sex work will continue to be enforced by state and federal law enforcement agencies.

These changes bring Victoria into line with other jurisdictions – including New South Wales, who successfully decriminalised sex work in 1995.

The Government is inviting feedback to inform the implementation of the sex work decriminalisation reforms. You can have your say by visiting engage.vic.gov.au/sex-work-decriminalisation.

For more information on the decriminalisation of sex work, visit vic.gov.au/sex-work-decriminalisation.

Quote attributable to Minister for Consumer Affairs Melissa Horne

“Every Victorian deserves to feel safe in their place of work – decriminalisation will ensure that sex work is safe work and go a long way towards breaking down the stigma sex workers continue to experience.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Workplace Safety Ingrid Stitt

“Replacing criminal sanctions with standard industry regulations has been proven elsewhere to improve workers’ access to workplace health and safety, healthcare and justice.”

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