

# 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



Friday, 11 February 2022

## HISTORIC LAWS PASSED TO DECRIMINALISE SEX WORK

The decriminalisation of sex work was last night enshrined in law, ensuring sex workers in Victoria have the same protections and recognition as any other worker in the state.

The *Sex Work Decriminalisation Act 2022* will address persistent discrimination and stigma experienced by sex workers and remove limits on the independence of sex workers to make free and fair choices about their employment.

The reforms will also contribute to improved safety and welfare for street-based sex workers. 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.

The changes will also allow industry regulation to be managed through existing agencies, such as WorkSafe, the Department of Health and local governments.

Decriminalisation of sex work in Victoria will occur in two stages. The first phase is set to commence in May this year and will remove most offences and criminal penalties for individuals participating in the act of consensual sex work. It will also introduce anti-discrimination protections for sex workers.

The second phase is expected to commence in late 2023, and will include the remainder of the reforms, and repeal the sex work licencing system.

The Government will continue to work with key stakeholders including sex workers, their peer organisations, local councils, and other key stakeholders to ensure the reforms are implemented in the best way possible.

For more information on the decriminalisation of sex work, visit [vic.gov.au/sex-work-decriminalisation](https://vic.gov.au/sex-work-decriminalisation).

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Consumer Affairs, Gaming and Liquor Regulation Melissa Horne

*“Every Victorian, no matter their industry, deserves to feel safe in their workplace. This is a historical day and a ground-breaking step towards ensuring sex workers receive the same rights as any other employee in the state.”*

*“Sex work is legitimate work and should be regulated through standard business laws. We’ll establish a new regulatory framework and ensure an efficient transition to the new business model.”*

*“We wouldn’t be here today without Fiona Patten and the power of work that went into her 2019 inquiry. I want to thank and congratulate her for her ongoing efforts in driving this reform.”*

### Quote attributable to Minister for Workplace Safety Ingrid Stitt

*“Decriminalising sex work will improve sex workers’ access to services that all workers have the right to – a safe workplace, healthcare and legal help.”*

### Quote attributable to Minister for Prevention of Family Violence and Minister for Women Gabrielle Williams

*“This reform means sex workers in Victoria will no longer be forced to make the impossible choice between working legally or keeping themselves safe.”*

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