

IMPLEMENTING HUMAN RIGHTS HIV RESPONSES THROUGH THE DECRIMINALISATION OF SEX WORK.

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Background/Purpose: Research from NSW, Australia and internationally demonstrates that decriminalisation increases sex workers access to human rights and reduces barriers to implementing effective HIV responses. There is also evidence that demonstrate the significant and compounding barriers created by counterproductive regulation for sex workers' access to HIV & STI prevention interventions, testing, treatment and care.

Approach: There is momentum around Australia on sex worker-led decriminalisation campaigns in Australia. These campaigns advocate for the removal of laws that criminalise sex workers, reduce sex workers control over our workplaces, create barriers for sex workers to access our human rights, and create barriers to implementing HIV and STI prevention strategies. The campaigns also provide sex workers with an opportunity to advocate for human rights and evidence-based, holistic HIV responses, such as the decriminalisation of sex work, removal of criminal laws around HIV and STIs, removal of mandatory testing, access to a variety of safer sex practices, peer education and outreach, and a partnership approach with governments in developing evidence-based peer-led policies and programs.

Outcomes/Impact: There has already been recent, positive law reform that supports sex workers workplace, health and safety, such as in the Australian Capital Territory where the criminalisation of sex workers and clients with HIV was repealed. Active decriminalisation campaigns push for a partnership approach between sex workers and the State and territory governments in creating an enabling environment for BBV and STI prevention that are effective, sex worker driven, increase sex workers' human rights, and meet the changing holistic health and other needs of sex workers.

Innovation and significance: The Lancet found decriminalisation of sex work to have the greatest effect on the course of HIV epidemics across all settings. Decriminalisation of sex work is an essential component to HIV and STI prevention, and access to health promotion and workplace, health and safety for all sex workers.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: Nil