

Changing laws, Changing status, Changing lives. Decriminalisation of Sex Work in Western Australia, what does it matter to Hepatitis?

Speakers/Facilitators:

Elena Jeffrey^{1,3}

Elena is a sex worker and person living with Hepatitis C. Currently the national Advocacy lead for Scarlet Alliance, Elena is sex worker and injecting drug user, including being involved in street based sex work, brothel work and private sex work in Western Australia.

Emma Softly^{2,3}

Emma Softly is the President of SWEAR WA (Sex Work Education, Advocacy & Rights Western Australia), Western Australia's peer sex worker organisation. SWEAR WA is completely led and run by sex workers, and provides peer support, peer & community education, advocacy, industry social events, referrals to sex worker friendly services, outreach, and lobby for the decriminalisation of sex work in WA.

Brandy^{2,3}

Brandy is the Vice President of SWEAR WA and convenor of DecrimWA, the campaign group informing and advocating for the full decriminalisation of sex work in Western Australia.

Paula Rae⁴

Paula is the Manager of Magenta, the sex worker support project for Western Australia. Magenta is a peer-based project dedicated to providing services to support and promote the health and safety of people involved in the sex industry in Western Australia.

¹ Scarlet Alliance, ² SWEAR, ³ Decrim WA, ⁴ Magenta.

Background and aims:

Sex work is decriminalised along the eastern seaboard, but not in Western Australia. The intersection between criminalisation of priority populations and Viral Hepatitis infection is identified in global literature; this workshop brings the linkages to life.

At the conclusion of this workshop every participant will have a practical understanding of at least one aspect of the sex work laws in Western Australia, be able to explain broadly what decriminalisation is and how it could be achieved, and have improved knowledge of the impact on Viral Hepatitis transmission.

Description of workshop:

A short presentation on current sex work laws in Australia and history of decriminalisation will ready participants to self select into four small groups based on areas of interest and expertise. Each group will examine an aspect of sex work laws in Western Australia, consider the impact on Viral Hepatitis transmission, infection and treatment, and decide if the law should remain, be amended, or repealed. Each group will present their ideas, findings and recommendations back to the larger group for discussion.

Methods and format:

After being introduced to the basics of laws and decriminalisation generally, participants will break into four groups, each covering an area of WA Sex Work law:

Street based soliciting and Move on notices powers

Information sharing with police and Internal examination on demand
Brothel workplaces and WHS protections
Individual sex workers, co-ops, groups or working alone

Each group will have a handout detailing the relevant laws, and will break down and discuss how they perceive the laws could impact Viral Hepatitis transmission, infection and treatment. Each group will make a determination on their area of law: keep, amend or repeal. The groups will nominate a spokesperson to bring the outcomes back to the entire workshop, and reflect on next steps on the road to decriminalisation in Western Australia.

Number of delegates:

Minimum 20, maximum 40.

Disclosure of Interest Statement: *See example below:*

“Scarlet Alliance, National Sex Workers Association receives funding from the Commonwealth, Victorian and Tasmanian Governments. Magenta receives funding from the West Australian Government. SWEAR is a past recipient of Red Umbrella Fund monies, and is otherwise unfunded. DecrimWA is an unfunded volunteer group.”

Note: If accepted into the program you will be requested to include a disclosure of interest slide into your workshop.