



Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide

Apostolic Administrator



29th October 2019
19/691

Letter to the Archdiocese of Adelaide and the Diocese of Port Pirie

Dear Sisters & Brothers

Concerning the Prostitution Bill

There has not been great publicity, but a review of the Bill affecting brothels and prostitution is about to be debated in the Lower House of State Parliament.

Under present law, prostitution is not illegal, but brothels are. The effect of the proposed legislation, introduced by Ms Tammy Franks MLC, is to decriminalise brothels.

The Bill has the support of many members of the Government and Opposition. The Premier himself supports the new legislation, while the Leader of the Opposition has stated he will not support it.

As Catholics we should have deep reservations about this proposed legislation. There is no wish on my part to see people engaged as prostitutes classified as criminals. What does concern, however, is the decriminalisation of brothels, because of the consequences which I understand also concern the police. If brothels are decriminalised, then the police will lose automatic right of access to these institutions, and hence the brothel could well become subject to criminal control, owned and controlled by local or overseas criminals. It also opens the possibility of further exploitation of women because the protection currently afforded by the law will be removed. It takes a special sort of courage for a working prostitute to make a complaint about her treatment.

Pimping, the practice of controlling prostitutes and arranging clients for them, receiving part of their earnings, is also decriminalised through this Bill. The effect would be to increase the power of the exploiters of women and the consequent risks to their safety.

Making brothels legal increases their social acceptability, and will result in an increased demand, which will further the market for trafficking. The status of all women is damaged if a law says that women can be bought and sold for sex. This is contrary to any human dignity, gender equality, and the status of women.

The decriminalisation of brothels gives serious cause for concern about the possible increase in the trafficking of Asian women to Australia. Social analysis statistics indicate the disproportionately high ratio of Asian women engaged in massage parlours. We know that in Australia very many women come to this country thinking their employment will be in the hospitality industry as waitresses and kitchen workers, and find they have been

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deceived and trapped into staffing brothels. The police need to be able to access brothels automatically and officially to ensure that human rights are not being violated.

The protection of vulnerable people caught up often in circumstances out of their control in the prostitution industry, leading lives that are oppressed by their circumstances, could better be served in Australia by following the example of various countries where the client, usually male, can be charged for criminal activity when engaging a prostitute. This applies in Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Canada, Northern Ireland, France, Republic of Ireland and Israel. The overseas experience has shown that this has resulted in significantly decreased exploitation and degradation for those engaged in prostitution. Under the present arrangement there is the extraordinary disparity that it is the woman not the man who gets arrested if trouble occurs. What an extraordinary and unjust bias.

As Christians we have our own outlook on the immorality involved in this industry. The present public debate is not about sexual morality but we should speak our concern to avoid increase in criminal ownership in the industry, and the further exploitation of women.

An email to your Member of Parliament is the least effective way of registering your objection. The most effective way is a phone call or personal interview. Please consider such action.

Yours in Christ



+ Gregory O'Kelly SJ
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