Myths and Facts about Decriminalization of Prostitution

(Measure Q, November ballot initiative, Berkeley California)

Decriminalization of prostitution means that all laws regarding prostitution would be removed. In other words, buying a woman would be socially and legally equivalent to buying cigarettes. Prostitution in all its forms - street, brothel, escort, massage - would be legally welcomed. Pimps the world over would become Berkeley's new businessmen.

Decriminalization of prostitution will increase legal, illegal, semi-legal and all prostitution. Decriminalization will make no difference in the physical and the emotional safety of women in prostitution. Regardless of its legal status, prostitution is extremely harmful to those in it.

There is little difference for the prostitute between legalized and decriminalized prostitution. They are both state-sponsored prostitution. In legal prostitution, the state is the pimp, collecting taxes. In decriminalized prostitution, the pimps remain in control, whether they are bar pimps, stripclub pimps, taxi driver pimps, or street pimps. In both legalized and decriminalized prostitution, the john is welcomed as legitimate consumer.

There is no way of making prostitution "a little bit better" any more than it is possible to make slavery "a little bit better." Prostitution is a profoundly harmful institution. Who does it harm the most? The woman or child who is prostituting is hurt the worst. She is hurt psychologically as well as physically. There is much evidence for this.

A progressive response to a community's concerns about prostitution

Currently on the November ballot, Measure Q promotes the sex industry under the cynical guise of helping women avoid the stigma of arrest. The real beneficiaries of Measure Q are johns, pimps, and traffickers. Should we arrest women in prostitution? No. Almost all women in prostitution are there as a last resort, they don't "choose" the paid rapes of prostitution the way someone chooses a career as an x-ray technician.

95% of those in prostitution urgently want to escape it. Let's offer women and men and children in prostitution real choices They tell us that they need stable housing, social services, medical treatment, and job training. That's what they should receive - not decriminalization. Should we arrest the pimps, johns, procurers and traffickers who use women in prostitution and profit from selling them? Yes. These are the perpetrators of sexual exploitation and abuse who should be arrested, not the women themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MYTH: Decriminalization of prostitution will stop illegal prostitution</th>
<th>FACT: Decriminalization of prostitution in Australia and New Zealand has resulted in an increase in illegal, hidden, and street prostitution. Decriminalization promotes sex trafficking.</th>
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<tr>
<td>MYTH: If prostitution were decriminalized, licensed brothel owners would not hire illegal, underage or trafficked women</td>
<td>FACT: Decriminalization increases child prostitution. This has been well documented in the Netherlands since brothel prostitution was instituted. Pimps - owners of brothels, escort agencies, and massage parlors - want to make money. They don't care if someone is illegal, a child, or trafficked. Pimps, traffickers, procurers and especially johns...</td>
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trafficked women. flock to wherever a thriving prostitution industry exists.

**MYTH:** If prostitution were decriminalized it would eliminate pimps by providing prostitutes with occupational alternatives

**FACT:** Prostitution is not labor, it is a violation of human rights. It is often paid rape. It is intrinsically harmful and traumatic. For almost everyone in it, prostitution is about not having a range of educational and job options to choose from. Most women in prostitution end up there only because many other options are not available. They do not have stable housing, they urgently need money to support children or pay for school, and they often have limited or no education. Imagine this scenario: Vocational Rehab counselors recommending that women learn how to prostitute as a way of supporting themselves. That occurred in New Zealand where prostitution was recently decriminalized.

**MYTH:** If prostitution were decriminalized it would promote the mental health of prostitutes because they feel isolated and ashamed.

**FACT:** It’s not the legal status of prostitution that causes the harm, it’s the prostitution itself. The longer she is in prostitution Ð legal or illegal Ð the more she is psychologically harmed. The shame and the isolation persist even if prostitution is decriminalized or legalized. Women in Dutch prostitution don’t register as legal prostitutes because they are ashamed to be known as prostitutes - even though they’d be accruing retirement benefits if they registered. Regardless of its legal status, women don’t want to be prostitutes and are ashamed of it. Does any woman in prostitution deserve to be treated disrespectfully or stigmatized? Of course not. But prostitution inevitably means that you’re treated like an object to be masturbated into.

**MYTH:** If prostitution were decriminalized, prostitutes would be safer from rape and physical assaults.

**FACT:** Women can report rapes and assaults to the police under current laws. The problem is that the contempt toward prostitutes stays the same, whether prostitution is legal or illegal. Women get raped in escort and brothel prostitution just as often as in street prostitution, according to a number of studies. Almost everyone in prostitution was raped as a child before she got into it. Incest and rape are bootcamp for prostitution.

**MYTH:** Decriminalizing prostitution would save a lot of money because police wouldn’t have to make arrests

**FACT:** Decriminalization has resulted in expensive legal challenges because no one wants prostitution zoned into their neighborhood or near their kids’ schools. Mustang Ranch (NV) was shut down because of tax evasion. Pimps are simply not going to hand over the massive profits that are a part of the industry.

**Prostitution Research & Education, San Francisco**

**Decriminalisation Versus Legislation**

**What do the terms really mean?**

**Decriminalisation**

Usually this term is used to mean that prostitution and all related activities such as pimping; procurement; brothel keeping and the buying and selling of sexual favours, no longer constitute criminal offences. Prostitution is regarded as work and subject only to the same restrictions as any other business. It includes street and brothel prostitution which can take place anywhere commercial activities may occur. Those advocating the decriminalisation of prostitution in
South Africa use it in this sense.

It is the most 'liberal' and 'extreme' approach. Recruitment, advertising and promotional activities may be conducted as for any other business and it is no longer monitored by the Police Service.

**Legalisation**

Prostitution and all related activities are generally illegal except under the conditions and in locations specified by legislation. In effect the State regulates prostitution and becomes the main pimp.

In Australia prostitution has been decriminalised in New South Wales and legalised in Victoria. The practical effects, however, appear to be very similar in both states.

In reality most decriminalised systems contain at least some elements of legalisation.

**SEX WORK**

In attempting to normalise prostitution as work the term sex work has been introduced by those promoting this option. Although using this term serves to sanitise the pimps and brothel keepers as legitimate businessmen it does nothing to end the violence and exploitation nor has it reduced the stigma associated with prostitution.

**VOLUNTARY PROSTITUTION**

Great caution should be used in distinguishing between so called voluntary and involuntary prostitution.

Worldwide the average age of entry into prostitution is 14 (Shared Hope International) and is decreasing. When these girls reach 18 can one really hold that a vocational choice has been made or is it merely the continuation of childhood abuse and exploitation?

Studies show that the majority of those who 'choose' to engage in prostitution have a history of childhood sexual and violent abuse.

Entering into prostitution is also generally a survival strategy: as Joseph Parker noted (Lola Green Baldwin Foundation): “The reality is that no woman wants to have sex with 5, 10, 15, 20 or more men a day, every day.” Can one really speak of choice at all if there are no viable alternatives to actually choose from?

**CHILD PROSTITUTION**

Similarly, caution should be used in drawing artificial boundaries between child prostitution and prostitution from the age of 18. In the light of the above it cruel to hold that at age 17 and 364 days a girl who is being prostituted is an exploited child but the very next day all protection is withdrawn. Child prostitution exists in every adult prostitution market that exists and has increased where prostitution has been legalised or decriminalised (Bindel:2004; Sullivan:2005; New Zealand Herald:2008)

**MYTH THAT DECRIMINALISATION/LEGALISATION OF PROSTITUTION IMPROVES THE LIVES OF WOMEN**

Arguments for decriminalisation or legalization are usually based on the mistaken assumption that a regulated sex industry will contain and control the growth of the brothel and street trade, and eliminate - or at least greatly reduce - the associated drugs; abuse; violence; organized crime; child prostitution and trafficking.

There is no evidence, however, to support these claims. In countries such as Netherlands, Australia and Germany where these policies were adopted the opposite happened and there has been a dramatic increase in legal and illegal prostitution, child prostitution and trafficking in persons for sexual purposes.
Australia

- Both decriminalization (NSW) and legalisation (Victoria) have been instituted in Australia. The results have been the same: an explosive increase in all facets of the sex industry. Legal brothels, child prostitution and trafficking have all increased and authorities concede that the illegal sex trade is out of control. Illegal sex premises outnumber legal by 4:1 in Sydney (SMH: 2006) and many operators traffic women from Asia (Daily Telegraph 2006).

- Illegal brothels outnumber legal 3:1 in Victoria. Many legal brothels reportedly are involved in the establishing and profiting from illegal brothels. Victoria, the first state to legalise prostitution, has the highest rates of child prostitution (Sullivan:2005). Street prostitution continues unabated and attempts to institute tolerance zones have come to nothing due to resistance from residents.

Netherlands (Amsterdam)

- The Mayor of Amsterdam, Job Cohen, has admitted that the policy of legalisation has been a failure and has instituted a reversal. He stated that organized crime dominated the industry in which sex trafficking, exploitation, drug abuse and money laundering was rife. The influence of organized crime on the city centre was a growing one. One third of the brothel windows have been bought out and replaced with fashion boutiques. Permits have been withdrawn from dozens of sex businesses including the well known Yab Yum brothel and Casa Rosso Theatre who reportedly had links to organised crime. Rafts of new restrictions on other aspects of the sex trade are being introduced.

- Tolerance zones set up for street prostitution have also proved a failure. In 2003 the Central_Amsterdam Tipplezone (pick-up area), established for street prostitutes in 1995 as away to control the problems associated with prostitution such as drug-dealing, trafficking and violence, was closed. The Mayor admitted that it had become a haven for traffickers, drug dealers and unsafe for women. The Tipplezone in Rotterdam was closed for similar reasons.

- The National Association of Dutch Sex Companies has reportedly complained by way of a letter to the Minister of Justice that banks no longer want to do business with them as they do not want to be associated with firms that may be involved in money laundering and human trafficking. The letter says the banks intend to close existing accounts and refuse to open new ones.

Germany

- In 2002 prostitution was decriminalised. Promotion of prostitution, pimping and brothels are legal.
- The overwhelming majority of prostitutes are foreign and Germany is as one of the highest receivers of trafficked women for sexual exploitation.
- In a report on the Prostitution Act produced by the Federal affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in 2007, the Federal Government conceded that the policy had failed to achieve the desired goals and had no real impact on the prostitute's social protection. The Report on the Prostitution Act summarized the Federal Government's conclusions as follows: The Report of the Act Regulating the Legal Situation of Prostitutes (Prostitution Act) published by the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth states that:German Federal Government to take a revisit the goals of the Prostitution Act and to see whether these goals have been fulfilled.

"The Federal Government believes that the Prostitution Act has only to a limited degree achieved the goals intended by the legislator.
Although it has been possible to create the legal framework to enable contracts of employment to be concluded that are subject to social insurance, few have as yet made use of this option. The Prostitution Act has thus up until now also not been able to make actual, measurable improvements to prostitutes’ social protection.

As regards improving prostitutes’ working conditions, hardly any measurable, positive impact has been observed in practice. At most there are first, tentative signs which point in this direction. It is especially in this area that no short-term improvements that could benefit the prostitutes themselves are to be expected.

The Prostitution Act has not recognisably improved the prostitutes’ means for leaving prostitution.

There are as yet no viable indications that the Prostitution Act has reduced crime.

The Prostitution Act has as yet contributed only very little in terms of improving transparency in the world of prostitution. On the other hand, the fears that were partly linked to the Prostitution Act have not proved true, in particular in the area of fighting crime. The Prostitution Act has not made it more difficult to prosecute trafficking in human beings, forced prostitution and other prostitution-related violence.”

On account of the decriminalisation of prostitution, police are no longer able to monitor the ‘scene’ or enter brothels as in the past to try to uncover trafficked or otherwise abused victims.

New Zealand

Prostitution was decriminalised in New Zealand in 2003 through the Prostitution reform Act. Unlicensed brothels containing no more than 4 prostitutes are allowed to operate in suburban areas as well (small owner operated brothels –soobs).

Already the main towns and cities, like Christchurch, Hamilton and Manakau, are already struggling to control the proliferation of brothels in suburban areas. The increase in street prostitution and attendant problems has lead the Council in Manakau to try to re-criminalise street solicitation.

New Zealand Police have complained that the new policy has tied their hands when it comes to dealing with the proliferation of under-age prostitution.

What really happened in New Zealand after prostitution was decriminalized in 2003?

1. Violence in prostitution continued after prostitution was decriminalized in New Zealand, according to the New Zealand Law Review Committee. The Report is available at http://www.justice.govt.nz/prostitution-law-review-committee/publications/plrcreport/index.html

2. Stigma and prejudice against prostitution, and the shame associated with prostitution, continued since decriminalization of prostitution in NZ.

3. Street prostitution in New Zealand’s cities increased dramatically after prostitution was decriminalized in 2003.

4. There is inadequate protection for children against prostitution in New Zealand since decriminalization.

5. The US State Department has noted trafficking of women and children since prostitution was decriminalized in New Zealand.

Decriminalization can’t stop the violence, abuse, and stigma that are built-in to
prostitution. Prostitution has increased dramatically in New Zealand since decriminalization in 2003, with a 200-400% increase in street prostitution in Auckland.

Prostitution of children and youth has increased, with humanitarian agencies declaring that indigenous Maori children are at highest risk for prostitution. When prostitution is decriminalized, neighborhoods mount legal battles over whose back yard the next brothel will be zoned into.

In October 2008, frightened parents discovered that a New Zealand brothel was in the same building as a child care center. Yet under decriminalized prostitution “We don’t believe we have any legal avenues to stop them,” said the director of the child care center.” ("Brothel Shares Childcare Building” OneNews NZ, Oct 14, 2008, http://tvnz.co.nz/view/page/411365/2199590)

“For the most part the women in prostitution who I talk to don’t really seem to care about their human rights. The stigma and shame of prostitution is still very strong even after decriminalization. The women I see feel that prejudice intensely. One of the women we work with was raped in prostitution since decriminalization. She told us, however, that she felt that ‘it was part of the job’ of prostitution. Of all the women I’ve worked with, none of them told me that when they were little girls they dreamed of growing up to be prostitutes.” - Director of an Auckland agency providing services to women in prostitution, 2008.


1. Violence in prostitution continued after prostitution was decriminalized in New Zealand, according to the New Zealand Law Review Committee.

“The majority of sex workers felt that the law could do little about violence that occurred.” (page 14) 35% reported in 2007 that they had been coerced to prostitute with a given john in the past 12 months. (page 46)

A majority of respondents felt that decriminalization made no difference with respect to the violence of johns in prostitution – they felt that it was inevitably a part of the sex industry. (page 57)

The Report notes that “few” sex workers, regardless of whether they were prostituting indoors or outdoors, reported any of the incidents of violence or crimes against them to the police. (page 122)

Many owners of brothels have the same exploitive contract arrangements that existed before prostitution was decriminalized. Often no written contracts or their questionable quality. (page 157)

2. Stigma and prejudice against prostitution and the shame associated with that, continued after decriminalization of prostitution.

The New Zealand Prostitution Review Committee stated, “Despite decriminalization, the social stigma surrounding involvement in the sex industry continues.” (page 154)

3. Street prostitution in New Zealand’s cities increased dramatically after prostitution was decriminalized in 2003, according to many news reports, and according to one report from the New Zealand Prostitution Review Committee itself.

4. In 2006, an Auckland lawyer declared decriminalization a "disaster" which had resulted in an "explosion" of children in prostitution in Auckland and Christchurch, three murders of people in prostitution, and local businesses complaining of prostitution occurring on their premises and used condoms littering streets and doorways. ("Barrister labels prostitution law ‘a disaster’" (http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3640007a11,00.html April 17, 2006)

http://www.familypolicyinstitute.org/stop_prostitution.php
Mama Tere Strickland, a Maori street outreach worker (who came to Berkeley to speak out against Measure Q in 2004) stated that in 2005, the numbers of those prostituting on the street in Auckland have increased by 400% since decriminalization.

The New Zealand Prostitution Review Committee states that street prostitution in Auckland more than doubled in just one year, 2006-7. (page 118). "Estimates indicate that the number of street workers in Manukau City may have quadrupled since June 2003...." Manukau City Council, Report of Manukau City Council on Street Prostitution Control available at: MMC Report on Street Prostitution August 2005.

The New Zealand Prostitution Review Committee comments on citizens’ complaints of increased street prostitution in two large communities in New Zealand: Christchurch and Manukau. (page 16).

In these same two communities, Christchurch and Manukau, street prostitution has shifted into traditionally residential areas where community residents harassed those in prostitution and people in street-based prostitution "propositioned members of the public, were aggressive, disruptive, and noisy."

Complaints from residents included "condoms, excrement, and other bodily waste” left in the street, shops, car parks, and on private property.
P (124)

5. There is inadequate protection for children against prostitution in New Zealand since decriminalization.

According to the New Zealand decriminalized prostitution law, the police have no right of entry into brothels, and have no right to ask for age-identification papers of those in prostitution – thus investigation of suspected youth prostitution is extremely difficult, according to police officers, who asked that the law be revised. (page 109)

6. The US State Department has noted trafficking of women and children since prostitution was decriminalized in New Zealand.

The Trafficking in Persons Report of the US State Dept notes that New Zealand has internal trafficking of women and children for commercial sexual exploitation, and that there are instances of debt bondage and document confiscation, and women from Asia, the Czech Republic, and Brazil "working illegally" as prostitutes. OneNews (NZ) 2008 NZ a sex trafficking destination. Accessed Jun 5, 2008 http://tvnz.co.nz/view/page/1316907/1831498

7. The NZ Prostitution Law Review Committee was biased and blatantly favored the sex industry:

“For people whose employment options may be limited, sex work, and particularly street based sex work, can offer a quick means of achieving financial gains...” (page 121 ) Melissa Farley, Ph.D. Prostitution Research & Education, San Francisco.

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   The link between organised crime and the prostitution industry has not been broken. In New Zealand strip club owners complain of unfair price competition from illegal operators using Asian women. In South Auckland police are battling against the gangs that control underage teenage street prostitution. United Future MP, Gordon Copeland, who was part of a 2006 working group reviewing problems with the new legislation, found that brothels in Waitakere and on the North Shore were run by Chinese ‘gangs’ who exploited mainly Chinese women and exploited the provisions relating to soobs.
As no longer illegal, police may no longer conduct raids unless acting on specific information. According to the New Zealand Police they no longer bother to monitor the sex trade at all. Consequently less and less is known about the trade enabling various exploiters to operate more unhindered.

The National Council of Women of New Zealand, which originally supported the decriminalisation of prostitution, is now of the view that the only winners from the 2003 Prostitution reform Act are males.

A report by the New Zealand Prostitution Law Reform Committee issued on operation of the Prostitution Reform Act could not find that the position of prostitutes had improved since the introduction of the new legislation - see attached summary by Melissa Farley in this regard.

Sweden

In 1999 at approximately the same time the Netherlands opted for legalisation, Sweden introduced a policy of abolition with the focus on clamping down on the demand and helping women to exit prostitution. The purchase and attempted purchase of sexual services was criminalised for the first time.

Street prostitution was reduced and more importantly a barrier was erected against trafficking. Swedish Police estimate the number of persons trafficked into Sweden were about 400 - 600 a year, a fraction of the estimated number of women trafficked into neighbouring Finland, Denmark and Norway.

Although initially sceptical, Swedish Police now say the act prohibiting the purchase of sexual services has prevented traffickers establishing themselves in Sweden. Telephone intercepts have revealed traffickers and pimps experiencing problems finding purchasers and so shifting to more lucrative markets like Norway and Denmark.

Other countries:

Norway has copied Sweden and has adopted the same legal approach as of 1 Jan 2009. South Korea has been following it for some time and countries such as UK and Italy are also heading in this direction.

Iceland has introduced a Bill to criminalise the purchase of sexual acts and to prohibit strip clubs.

Prostitution fuels and promotes trafficking in women.

The links between organised crime, prostitution and trafficking are well established. The traffickers are often highly organised entrepreneurs that earn huge profits from the exploitation of women and children. But international and local trafficking in women and children cannot flourish without the local prostitution markets. If a local prostitution market decreases substantially, organised crime networks are likely to relocate to a more profitable location (Bindel 2004).

Legalisation/decriminalisation is a gift to pimps, traffickers and the sex industry. People often don’t realize that decriminalisation means decriminalisation of the whole sex industry and not only the women. They haven’t thought through the consequences of legalizing pimps as legitimate sex entrepreneurs(Raymond 2003).

In South Africa, in addition to local criminal crime groups, foreign organised criminal groups from Russia, Bulgaria, Thailand, China and Nigeria are already established in the local sex industry. Strip clubs in particular have been used as not only fronts for prostitution but also to...
traffic in women for sexual exploitation on work permits as ‘exotic dancers’ (Noseweek Dec 2008). Traffickers would similarly be able to bring in foreign women on work permits under the guise that they are ‘migrant sex workers’.

- As conceded by the South African Law Reform Commission in Chapter 4 of the Discussion Papers re Trafficking released in 2006, curtailment of trafficking in persons for prostitution seems to go hand in hand with strong measure to eliminate the demand for prostituted women and children.

- In terms of article 9.5 of the Palermo Protocol (SA are signatories) States Parties must go further than discouraging the demand for trafficked persons per se but must take measures to discourage the demand that fosters all forms of exploitation of persons, especially women and children that leads to trafficking. Decriminalising/legalising prostitution, and thereby creating large sex markets that act as a pull factor for sex traffickers, would not fulfil our obligations in this regard.

Drugs, crime and violence are intrinsic to the prostitution industry

- No country has managed to break the link between prostitution, crime, drugs and violence.

- J P Smith, Council representative for Sea Point, a well known prostitution ‘hot spot’, and Chairperson for the Cape Town City Safety and Security Portfolio Committee, has stated that the City has found a definite link between prostitution and general crime.

Legalisation/decriminalization does not promote women’s health.

- A legalised/decriminalised system of prostitution that mandates health checks and certification only for women and not for clients is blatantly discriminatory to women. "Women only” health checks make no public health sense because monitoring prostituted women does not protect them from HIV/AIDS or STDs, since male "clients” can and do originally transmit disease to the women (Raymond:2003)

- Neither do so-called enforceable condom policies. In one of Coalition against Women in Trafficking’s (CAW) studies, U.S. women in prostitution interviewed reported the following: 47% stated that men expected sex without a condom; 73% reported that men offered to pay more for sex without a condom; 45% of women said they were abused if they insisted that men use condoms. Some women said that certain establishments may have rules that men wear condoms but, in reality, men still try to have sex without them. One woman stated: "It’s ‘regulation’ to wear a condom at the sauna, but negotiable between parties on the side. Most guys expected blow jobs without a condom (Raymond and Hughes: 2001).”

- In reality, the enforcement of condom policy was left to the individual women in prostitution, and the offer of extra money was an insistent pressure. One woman stated: "I’d be one of those liars if I said ‘Oh I always used a condom.’ If there was extra money coming in, then the condom would be out the window. I was looking for the extra money.” Many factors militate against condom use: the need of women to make money; older women's decline in attractiveness to men; competition from places that do not require condoms; pimp pressure on women to have sex with no condom for more money; money needed for a drug habit or to pay off the pimp; and the general lack of control that prostituted women have over their bodies in prostitution venues.(Raymond 2003)

- So called “safety policies” in brothels did not protect women from harm. Even where brothels supposedly monitored the “customers” and utilised "bouncers,” women stated that they were injured by buyers and, at times, by brothel owners and their friends. Even when someone
intervened to control buyers' abuse, women lived in a climate of fear. Although 60 percent of women reported that buyers had sometimes been prevented from abusing them, half of those women answered that, nonetheless, they thought that they might be killed by one of their "customers" (Raymond et al: 2002).

- Then there is the harm to the women herself: Like combat veterans, women in prostitution suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a psychological reaction to extreme physical and emotional trauma. Symptoms are acute anxiety, depression, insomnia, irritability, flashbacks, emotional numbing, and being in a state of emotional and physical hyperalertness. 67% of those in prostitution from five countries (including SA) met criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD, a rate similar to that of battered women, rape victims, and state-sponsored torture survivors. (Melissa Farley, Isin Baral, Merab Kiremire, Ufuk Sezgin, "Prostitution in Five Countries: Violence and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder" (1998) Feminism & Psychology 8 (4): 405-426f

Government:
- Governments that legalise/decriminalise prostitution as "sex work" will have a huge economic stake in the sex industry. Consequently, this will foster their increased dependence on the sex sector. If women in prostitution are counted as workers, pimps as businessmen, and buyers as consumers of sexual services, thus legitimating the entire sex industry as an economic sector, then governments can abdicate responsibility for making decent and sustainable employment available to women. (Raymond 2003).

Policy option
- The failure of the decriminalisation/legalisation of prostitution as a social policy is being increasingly acknowledged and abandoned in favour of targeting the demand for prostitution together with offering programmes to help women exit the trade.

- South Africa has high unemployment, extreme economic disparities, porous borders, pervasive corruption in all sectors of society agencies and extremely high levels of rape, violence and abuse of women and children.

- It is therefore unfathomable why it is suggested that policies of legalisation/decriminalisation that have proved to be complete failures in better resourced countries would work for SA

- The new amended Sexual Offences Act provides more tools to tackle this harmful and exploitative trade. The buyers of sexual acts have even been criminalised in terms of section 11. What is required, however, apart from more and better exit programmes is the will to help women out of what amounts to a form of gender based violence.

- It is a particularly nasty form of sexual exploitation, stripping its victims of their dignity, self worth and true potential.

- The only rational and responsible policy for South Africa is to diligently enforce the laws currently on the statute books with a particular focus on buyers, pimps, procurers, traffickers for government in partnership with our churches, and responsible NGO’s to develop sustainable programmes to end the sexual servitude of these women and children.