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**NEWS REPORT**

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| <b>Headline</b>             | Plea to close illegal brothels |
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| <b>Page</b>                 | 2                              |
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A Sunshine Coast brothel owner has called for an overhaul of Queensland prostitution laws as evidence emerges that illegal brothels are continuing to operate in the region.

Scarlet Harem madam Paris Satine says illegal operators, using mostly Asian women, are run throughout the Coast and pimps receive little more than a slap on the wrist from the courts if they are brought to justice. Fines handed out to illegal brothel organisers were minuscule compared to the \$30,000 annual licensing fee she must pay.

Chinese man Zhoufeng Zhang was recently fined just \$2000 after he told a Maroochydore court he acted as an “administrator” for an illegal Asian sex ring.

“He would make that back in a day,” Ms Satine said.

“They’re just laughing at us. Legal operators have told the government how to close illegal brothels down but it would appear that the government is happy to turn a blind eye.”

Ms Satine said laws needed to be changed so people offering sex services were required to be licensed and permit numbers should be displayed with advertising. Under current Queensland legislation, sole operators do not need a licence while legal brothels face a raft of requirements administered by the government through the Prostitution Licensing Authority. Legal brothels must pay the annual licensing fee and managers must pay a further \$800 fee each year.

Buderim MP Steve Dickson launched state-wide criticism of Queensland prostitution laws last week, saying the number of illegal brothels had risen dramatically.

“The state government takes credit for legalising prostitution but with such pathetic fines, they are actually encouraging illegal sex rings,” he said.

“Perhaps it’s time to instigate a royal commission.”

Queensland police minister Neil Roberts said cabinet had endorsed tough new measures to tighten legislation surrounding illegal prostitution. However, if Mr Dickson had any evidence of illegal prostitution, he should immediately provide it to the police, he said.

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