



HUMAN TRAFFICKING WORKING GROUP

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NEWS REPORT

Headline	Laws target sex on sly – Children banned from escort work
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Children will be protected from working as escorts under new laws put before State Parliament this week. The laws will also allow phones to be cut off in illegal brothels. And prostitutes who expose the extent of the state's flourishing illegal sex industry will be let off the hook.

But Sunshine Coast MP Steve Dickson, who has blown the whistle on illegal prostitution “booming” on the Sunshine Coast, says the new laws are a mere Band-Aid on a gaping wound.

“If the Bligh Government was fair dinkum about proper reform it would introduce heavy mandatory fines for illegal operators that were far higher than the \$2000 fines now being handed down by courts,” he said.

“It makes a mockery of the system that legal brothels pay upwards of \$30,000 a year in government compliance fees and charges.”

Premier Anna Bligh introduced the new laws on Tuesday in a Bill designed to cut the illegal industry off at the knees, partly by targeting “escort agencies”, which undercut legal brothels by providing sex on the sly.

The laws follow a review of Queensland's prostitution laws by the Crime and Misconduct Commission, which found the legislation governing legal prostitution was operating effectively but needed improvement.

“There is no doubt that street prostitution is nothing like what it was before our current prostitution laws came into place,” Ms Bligh said.

Police Minister Neil Roberts said that under the tougher regime, escort agencies would face more restrictions on their advertisements including a clear stipulation sexual acts are not part of the service.

The laws also carry an amendment to the Child Employment Act stipulating that it is illegal to hire a child as an escort, which will shore up existing laws protecting children. Brothels and escort agencies contravening the new laws may find their phone systems shut down by police. New penalties will include asset confiscation and jail terms of up to seven years.

A “certificate of discharge” will be available to sex workers in exchange for evidence relating to illegal prostitution. Mr Dickson said the amendments were a direct result of widespread acknowledgement that illegal prostitution was out of control in Queensland.

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