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NEWS REPORT

Headline	Man found guilty in sex slave case
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A MAN sentenced to 14 years' jail for possessing five Thai women as slaves to work in South Melbourne brothels was yesterday convicted of using a sixth woman as part of the scheme.

Kam Tin Ho, 40, was the Melbourne architect of the enterprise, which brought the women to Australia to work in brothels in 2003 and 2004. Five of the six had previously been prostitutes.

The women were kept in houses in Mount Waverley, Ashburton and North Fitzroy and rarely let out unsupervised. Their passports were seized and they had to service 650 to 750 clients to repay debts of up to \$94,000 for their passage, and to send money to their families.

After a 10-week trial in the Supreme Court, Justice Philip Cummins last month sentenced Kam Tin Ho to 14 years' jail, with a minimum of 11 years, for 10 offences including five of possessing a slave and four of trying to conceal cash transfers to the women's families in Thailand.

His brother Ho Kam Ho, 39, will serve 10 years' jail with a minimum of seven after being convicted of three counts of exercising power over slaves and one of entering into a commercial transaction involving a slave.

Two other men, Chee Fui Hoo, 42, and Slamet Edy Rahardjo, 53, were found not guilty of related charges. A suppression order, expiring yesterday, prevented earlier reporting of the brothers' sentences.

Justice Cummins said they had controlled the vulnerable women with "the ever-present shadow of a minder under the veneer of a helper", describing the scheme as "modern slavery, not with physical chains but with mental chains".

Kam Tin Ho showed little emotion as a Supreme Court jury found him guilty of using the sixth woman as a slave, but not guilty of possessing her, following a week-long trial before Justice Lex Lasry.

Sarisa Leech, 37, became tearful as she was convicted of possessing and using the woman as a slave. The court heard she had bought the woman in Thailand, arranged travel to Australia and lived with her to control her movements.

All six women received \$5 of the \$125 charged by the brothels for each client they serviced while fulfilling their contracts.

In the first trial, John Dickinson, for Kam Tin Ho, said: "A harsh, exploitative contract — and I'm not saying this was — would not qualify as leading to a condition of slavery."

Justice Lasry will hear pre-sentence submissions on October 22.

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