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NEWS REPORT

Headline	Act promotes legal brothels as 'safer, cleaner' alternative
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ABOVE or below ground, brothels are not safe.

During my stoushes with the State Government over its brothel gag on city councils, I was routinely subjected to this line of emotional blackmail: “keeping brothels illegal will just drive prostitution underground and put women in danger”.

The main aim of Queensland’s 1999 Prostitution Act was to bring the illegal sector in from the cold and make prostitution safe.

But it was a line I didn’t buy at the time because all of the overseas and interstate evidence showed this approach had never worked, evidence of which I presented over and over again to my fellow councillors and to politicians such as Kerry Shine.

After 10 years of legal brothels in Queensland we now know legalising brothels has also failed to curb the blossoming illegal sector here which is 10 times bigger than the legal sector.

A report released this month from the University of Queensland says: “The introduction of licensed brothels in Queensland has had little, if any impact on illegal forms of prostitution”.

In what is a supreme irony, the UQ report says the Prostitution Act may be pushing prostitution underground and contributing to the high number of illegal brothels in Queensland.

Hang on.

It was moral wowsersism that risked pushing prostitution underground, not the enlightened legal brothel policy.

Legalising brothels was sold to the public on false pretences and people should rightly be outraged that large city councils are forced by law to approve applications.

Mayor Peter Taylor and a majority of councillors have said they would not have approved Jim Welch’s brothel if Kerry Shine and the State Government had given them a choice.

For no gain in safety for women working in the unaffected illegal sector, Queensland’s brothel laws have achieved the legitimisation of prostitution in the minds of a new generation of young women whose government says this is an acceptable and safe industry.

Young women who go to work in a legal brothel are not told that the incubation period for gonorrhoea is two-eight days and syphilis two-eight weeks rendering the much vaunted six-weekly health checks useless.

They’re not told that condoms break and that there are a raft of sexually transmitted diseases for which condoms offer no protection.

What other industry takes such risks with Occupational Health and Safety?

But 10 years of legal brothels in Queensland has given teenage girls in Toowoomba a choice — serving fries at McDonalds for a pittance or earning the industry average of \$1300 per week at Deviations.

The ACT, where I now live, was a trailblazer for legalising brothels. Its Fyshwick industrial precinct was visited by the then Queensland Police Minister Tony McGrady on a fact-finding mission and he told me it was a fine example of the success of legalising brothels.

This week the ACT Coroner announced he would re-open the case of Janine Cameron who tragically died in a legal brothel of a drug overdose last year just six weeks after her 17th birthday.

Serious questions are being asked about the failure of ACT Government's prostitution inspectors to protect her.

How old was she when she started work there?

Why did the promised "regulation" fail?

A Parliamentary Inquiry will probably be held.

Above or below ground, brothels are not fun places for young women.

Our laws shouldn't pretend they can be.

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