

Sex Work and the Laws in Queensland



This information sheet explains what is legal and illegal in Queensland, and answers frequently asked questions.

There are 3 key pieces of legislation that regulate sex work and they are:

- The Prostitution* Act (Qld) 1999 (licensed brothels)
- The Criminal Code 1899, Chapter 22a (individual sex workers)
- The Police Powers and Responsibilities Act 2000 (undercover policing)

*Our preferred terminology is 'sex work'; the term 'prostitution' is used only where it is directly quoted from legislation

How is 'prostitution' defined in the law?

Under the Criminal Code, s.229E the meaning of prostitution is:

“ A person engages in prostitution if the person engages, or offers to engage, in the provision to another person, under an arrangement of a commercial character, of any of the following activities—

- a) sexual intercourse;
- b) masturbation;
- c) oral sex;
- d) any activity, other than sexual intercourse, masturbation or oral sex, that involves the use of 1 person by another for his or her sexual satisfaction involving physical contact.”

So, to be 'prostitution' it must have all three of the following:

- Commercial character (exchange of money or something else of value)
- Sexual satisfaction
- Physical contact

Sexual intercourse is defined as including “either or both of the following activities:

- the penetration, to any extent, of the vagina, vulva or anus of a person by any part of the body of another person
- the penetration, to any extent, of the vagina, vulva or anus of a person, carried out by another person using an object.”

What is legal in Queensland?

Each Australian state has its own prostitution laws. What is legal in one state is not necessarily legal in another. It is important to know what is legal and what is not so you can make informed choices about how and where to work if you don't want to take the risk of being arrested.

Most of the laws in Queensland governing sex work come under the Prostitution Act 1999 and the Criminal Code 1899 (Chapter 22a).

There are two forms of legal sex work in Queensland:

1. Private work (sole traders)

This is where a single sex worker works alone, whether it is from their home, unit, motel or hotel. Private sex workers are lawfully allowed to provide incalls and outcalls to clients provided they are working by themselves. You may not work as an escort doing outcalls for an escort agency regardless of where the agency is located (e.g. you may not work for an interstate escort agency and provide escorts in Queensland).

The only other person who can participate in the business is the person hired to conduct the services of a bodyguard and/or driver. This can be the same person but they must be licensed under the Security Providers Act 1993 to be both a bodyguard and driver. The bodyguard must have a Bodyguard Licence and the driver must have a Crowd Controller's Licence.

Sole traders are not allowed to have any other support staff such as receptionists or cleaners but it is legal to have someone to be a 'message taker'. That is someone who keeps track of where you are going and how long you will be but only as much as is necessary to keep you safe. The 'message taker' cannot be a sex worker themselves or take messages for more than one sex worker at a time. The 'message taker' cannot be on premises while you are working.

2. Sex work conducted in a licensed brothel

To work in a licensed brothel, a sex worker needs to have a current sexual health certificate issued by a health professional. Copies of these certificates are required by licensees and must remain current for the time you are working at the licensed brothel. They need to be renewed every 3 months.

(See also [Respect Inc Sexual Health Information](#))

Laws on use of prophylactics (condoms, dams):

In December 2003, an amendment to the Prostitution Act 1999 was passed that requires all sex workers and clients to use prophylactics during sex and oral (giving and receiving). This means using condoms for penetrative sex, using condoms for giving head and using dams while receiving oral sex (anal and vaginal). Any penetration could be included (e.g. use gloves/finger cots for penetration by fingers or hands and condoms on dildos, vibrators and strap-ons).

This may apply to:

- Using condoms for sexual intercourse.

- Using condoms for blow jobs and using dams for receiving oral sex (anal and vaginal).
- Using gloves/finger cots for fingers or hands.
- Using condoms on dildos, vibrators and strap-ons.

In 2006 this law was changed so that it became illegal to 'offer' or 'ask for' sexual services without a prophylactics. Police will pose as clients to entrap sex workers into agreeing ('offering') to provide services without condoms or dams. This may be via text, over the phone, or in person.

Laws on advertising sexual services:

All advertising of sexual services must comply with the Prostitution Act 1999, and the Advertising Guidelines produced by the Prostitution Licensing Authority (PLA). This includes advertising your services in Queensland or elsewhere, and any website you link to.

These policies state, among other things, that:

- you can NOT describe the services you offer
- you cannot advertise illegal services (doubles)
- you cannot make direct or indirect references to massage
- an 18+ warning must be included on all websites, and any website linked to from your advertising must be compliant with Queensland laws
- you can place a photo in your advertisement (there are limitations).

If you are in any doubt about whether an advertisement complies with the law, go to the Advertising section of the Respect Inc website.

What is illegal in Queensland?

Unlicensed brothels or parlours

A list of licensed brothels is available on the Prostitution Licensing Authority website. If you

are unsure about whether the brothel is licensed, check the list at www.pla.qld.gov.au.

Two or more sex workers working together or sharing a premises

Working together is illegal. Even if you are not answering each other's phones or sharing clients, the fact that you are both on or sharing the premises makes it illegal. By law, a premise includes a building or structure of any type (full use, part use or use of a group of buildings), the land or water on which the building or structures are located, and any vehicle, caravan, vessel or aircraft.

Street based sex work

Approaching clients or loitering to attract clients (soliciting) in any public place, such as cafes, casinos, streets, truck stops, clubs, hotels and nightclubs is illegal.

Escort agencies

The only way you can work providing outcalls is as a private operator. Under the Prostitution Act 1999, escort agencies are illegal.

Massage parlours

Massage parlours that provide happy endings are illegal. As a private operator, it is illegal to advertise or describe yourself as providing massage if you provide any sexual service (eg. including hand relief or happy endings).

Doubles

Organising or participating with another sex worker in a double act is illegal.

Not using condoms, dams

It is illegal in Queensland to provide any sexual service to a client without using the appropriate prophylactic.

Procuring prostitution

By law, to procure prostitution means to "knowingly entice or recruit for the purposes of sexual exploitation". It is illegal to entice a person

to engage in sex work either in Queensland or elsewhere.

Knowingly participating in the provision of prostitution by another person

If you do this, directly or indirectly, you are committing a crime. This includes:

- receiving, directing or redirecting telephone calls, texts, or other forms of messages, taking bookings or receiving money, knowing the action is in connection with sex work by another person (a message taker can only take a message to ensure the safety of the sex worker, and must not be a sex worker themselves, and can only do so for one sex worker at a time)
- drivers, operators and hirers of vehicles who knowingly provide transport for sex workers or clients (a person can only drive a sex worker to a booking if they have a Crowd Controller's Licence and only drives for one sex worker at a time). A sex worker cannot drive another sex worker.
- assist another person with their advertising
- receiving financial or other benefit from another person engaging in sex work in return for referring client.

Entrapment

Police in Queensland pose as clients in order to obtain evidence. This may be in person, over the phone, or via text. Under the Police Powers Act 2000, they have immunity to request illegal services. Keep in mind agreeing to offer illegal services (without actually doing them) is in some cases a crime.

Disclaimer:

All material in this information sheet is provided for your information only and may not be construed as legal advice or instruction.

Respect Inc contact:

Brisbane Office

28 Mein Street
Spring Hill QLD 4000
07 3835 1111 (phone)

Gold Coast

Level 1, 3 Davenport Street
Southport QLD 4215
04 0196 9223 (phone)

Cairns Office

7/24 Florence Street
Cairns City QLD 4870
07 4051 5009 (phone)

Townsville Office

118a Charters Towers Road
Hermit Park Townsville QLD 4812
07 4724 4853 (phone)

www.respectqld.org.au
info@respectqld.org.au

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