

Harm Reduction Frameworks in Sex Worker Peer Education in Australia; Theoretical Discussions



www.scarletalliance.org.au

PEER EDUCATION

The success of sex worker organisations and projects in Australia can be attributed to the employment of current and or past sex workers as peer educators. Sex work peer educators have long demonstrated their expertise as educators, to other sex workers and clients of the sex industry. With in-depth and first-hand experience, they provide highly knowledgeable health education, support, referrals and equipment to other sex workers, acting promptly and appropriately to an individual's needs.

Scarlet Alliance shows leadership by actively including representation of current and former sex workers in all levels of staffing and management.

Sex Workers deserve recognition as the true experts in their own occupation.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Effective community development takes harm reduction outside the clinic and beyond the condom. It seeks to empower individuals and groups to effect change in their own communities. Empowerment means sex workers recognise and value the expert skills and knowledge they already possess. It also means having opportunities to gain new skills in a supportive, enabling environment.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Sex workers' views, opinions, and expert advice must be incorporated at all stages when developing and implementing policies, programs and services. True community engagement is about providing real opportunities for sex workers to participate in and drive the process, whether it be project development, needs assessment, focus testing, legal reform or the implementation and analysis of research. This process must be respectful and inclusive of the incredible diversity of sex workers and the different communities they identify with.

HEALTH PROMOTION

Health promotion for sex workers needs to be holistic. Messages that focus solely on disease or behavioural change neither accommodate nor recognise sex workers complete health profile. Health promotion initiatives also address issues such as stress, burn out, mental health; nutrition; disabling legal frameworks; occupational health and safety and access to housing and other social services. These services are provided in a respectful and supportive environment accommodating peoples' needs on an individual basis.

Harm Reduction is a key strategy used by sex worker organisations in Australia. This approach is informed by other, equally important, key strategies:

- peer education;
- community engagement;
- community development; and
- health promotion



Photographs – above: Scarlet Alliance National Forum Delegates, October 2005, Melbourne, Australia. c. Scarlet Alliance 2006. Below – from left to right: Sex workers march in PRIDE, during the Scarlet Alliance National Forum, November 2006, Adelaide, South Australia, c. Scarlet Alliance 2006; Sex workers march in Mardi Gras, for SWOP and Touching Base, March 2002, Sydney, New South Wales, c. Doerthe Jansen 2002; Joy Bus Tour celebrates the history of sex work in Kings Cross and East Sydney, during Womens History Month, for Scarlet Alliance, March 2005, Kings Cross, New South Wales, c. Scarlet Alliance 2005



Rachel Wotton, International Spokesperson, Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association

Phone: +61-2-9326 9455 Fax: +61-2-9326 9870 Post: PO Box 261, DARLINGHURST NSW 1300
Street: Level 2, 349 Crown Street, Surry Hills Email: info@scarletalliance.org.au Web: www.scarletalliance.org.au