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Title: Sexual health outcomes and wellbeing of sex workers in Western Australia – the LASH 2.0 Study

Authors: A/Prof Linda Selvey¹; Dr Roanna Lobo²; Dr Jonathan Hallett²; Professor Basil Donovan³; Ms Julie Bates⁴; Ms Kahlia McCausland²

Affiliations

1 School of Public Health, Curtin University, Bentley, Australia

2 Collaboration for Evidence, Research and Impact in Public Health, School of Public Health, Curtin University, Bentley, Australia

3 The Kirby Institute, UNSW Australia, Sydney, Australia

4 Urban Realists Planning & Health Consultants, Sydney, Australia

Abstract

Background

The Law and Sex worker Health (LASH) 2.0 Study aims to investigate the intersection between legislation and sex worker health and safety; and the intersections between sex workers, service providers and police. We will also assess the effectiveness of existing services targeting sex workers, and identify challenges sex workers experience in accessing services.

Methods

The study involves peer researchers as partners. We are using a range of sources (key advisors, online and paper advertisements, and social networking) to estimate the size and types of sex worker services in WA and to promote a survey of sex workers (including men and transgender workers) across WA. Peer researchers visit parlours to collect surveys and assess occupational safety and resources available to sex workers in work settings. We will estimate the prevalence of bacterial sexually transmitted infections and blood-borne viruses using clinic data. We will also review and analyse court charge data (2000-2015) about compliance with the WA Prostitution Act 2000.

Results

Preliminary data indicate the fluidity of the sex industry in WA, with frequent changes in the location and names of parlours not included in WA's 'containment' policy. This creates challenges for outreach services. There has been an increase in the proportion of private workers. The downturn in the WA economy has resulted in a decrease in clients and an apparent increase in sex workers.

Conclusion

Study findings will inform decisions about the provision of health services to sex workers and will hopefully inform any future legislation relating to sex work.