

Sex in the City: regulations, rights and responsibilities in Sydney

Authors:

Spike Boydell^{1*}, Penny Crofts², Jason Prior³, Andrew Jakubowicz⁴ & Glen Searle⁵

¹Asia-Pacific Centre for Complex Real Property Rights, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

²Asia-Pacific Centre for Complex Real Property Rights & Faculty of Law, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

³Asia-Pacific Centre for Complex Real Property Rights & Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

⁴Cosmopolitan and Civil Societies, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia

⁵Asia-Pacific Centre for Complex Real Property Rights UTS, and School of Geography, Planning & Architecture, University of Queensland, Australia

***Corresponding author contact details:**

Professor Spike Boydell
Director, Asia-Pacific Centre for Complex Real Property Rights
University of Technology, Sydney
PO Box 123
Broadway, NSW, 2007
Australia

e: spike.boydell@uts.edu.au

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Abstract:

The state regulates sex industry types in accordance with a range of complex, overlapping and often conflicting legal, policing, planning and administrative mechanisms. The sex industry in Sydney is currently regulated through all levels of Australian government. New South Wales (NSW) is seen as leading the charge within Australia for its neoliberal market model of occupational and premises regulation. Taking a transdisciplinary research design, this paper identifies positive steps towards citizenship and the sex industry in inner Sydney.

We consider how local authorities have attempted to engage with these issues in our analysis. First, we outline the law reforms that have occurred. Second, we explore how local authorities in Sydney have sought to place sex industry-based participatory processes. Third, we discuss how engagement of the sex industry within the citizenry extends to a provision of safe and violence-free working environment.

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Introduction¹

Within Sydney's built environment, the sex industry is made up of a complex array of types, including adult entertainment and sex industry premises such as brothels, massage parlours, gay bathhouses, sex clubs, street-based sex work, escort work and home occupation sex services (Brothels Taskforce, 2001). While some of these types such as adult entertainment and sex industry premises are contained within buildings, others such as street-based sex work and escort work operate from a variety of provision sites – places where sex workers provide a sexual service to a client, either in the public domain (street, park, car, etc) or in the private domain (hotel/motel, residence, etc), and solicitation areas – places in the public domain where sex workers and clients actively negotiate the provision of sexual services.

The inner Sydney suburbs of East Sydney, Darlinghurst, Potts Point (which includes Kings Cross) and Woolloomooloo have a rich history of the sex industry in all its forms, spanning over 150 years. While studies have found that the highest concentration of street-based sex workers is in these inner Sydney suburbs (Perkins, 1991a), they can also be found in a range of other locations, including Canterbury Road, the Great Western Highway and Cabramatta. While many people associate the sex industry with such visible types as street-based sex work, brothels and massage parlours, it is estimated that the majority of the sex industry (at least

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40%) operates from residential apartments and homes across the metropolitan area, in what are known as *home occupation* sex services (Brothels Taskforce, 2001).

Government authorities have sought to regulate the existence and operation of the various sex industry types in accordance with a range of complex, overlapping and often conflicting legal, policing, planning and administrative mechanisms and techniques. Such regulation has been driven by a range of similarly complex and often conflicting discourses, attitudes and beliefs. These mechanisms consider how necessary, orderly, moral, healthy or profitable these sex industry typologies are for the city (Crofts, 2003, 2006; Prior, 2008; Prior & Boydell, 2008; see also: Foucault, 1992; Kerkin, 2004; Bell & Binnie, 2004; Huber *et al.*, 2009). In this paper, we focus on the street sex work and brothel- and home-based sex work sectors of the industry. The sex industry in Sydney is currently regulated through all levels of Australian government (Young, 2008), from federal interest in human trafficking and taxation, through states' interest in health and social order and local government responsibilities for zoning, planning and public health. The history for such regulation follows many years of debate (Carpenter, 1996; Crofts, 2003, 2006; Prior, 2008; Prior & Boydell, 2008). Essentially, sex work has been decriminalised in NSW (Benson, 2007).

In Australia, the state of NSW (of which Sydney is the capital) has claimed for itself the title of the most progressive state, legislating for sex work to be regulated as any other occupation or industry by local government within planning guidelines (Sex Services Premises Planning Advisory Panel, 2004). NSW is seen as leading the charge within Australia with its neoliberal market model of occupational and premises regulation, an approach that contrasts with more socially conservative approaches that have been developed in such countries as the United Kingdom (Hubbard, 2004; Munro, 2005). While federal legislation and policies relating to the

sex industry are of importance, in this paper, we focus on recent NSW law reforms and the trickle-down effect these have had on the sex industry in Sydney.

As a consequence of NSW law reforms commencing in the late 1970s, the sex industry in the Sydney metropolitan area has the potential to be organised and regulated as a lawful subject rather than as a criminal subject. The legislative changes saw a significant shift in the governance of the sex industry from a matter of policing to one of local government planning. In this paper, we explore the way in which these law reforms have created the potential for responding to, and regarding, the sex industry as a citizen, the ways in which councils governing inner Sydney – City of Sydney and South Sydney Council (until its amalgamation into City of Sydney in 2003) – communities/residents, and the sex industry responded to these reforms, and the new forms of (potential) ‘citizenship’ that they promulgated.

We draw upon the idea of citizenship in recognition of the (gradual) change in status of the sex industry from the criminal to the legal. This notion of citizenship can be applied at different structural and individual levels – to the sex industry generally, to the regulation of sex services premises and to sex workers. We argue that the development of the sex industry as (potential) citizen in inner Sydney is not just about legal status, but also about accountability, legitimacy and participation (Carter & Geoffrey, 2002). In extending citizenship to the sex industry, we build on the idea of citizenship that has been applied productively to corporations in order to import ideas of participation and social responsibility (Rubenstein, 2004; Zadek, 2007). We explore the ways in which changes in the conception of the sex industry as legal rather than criminal has shifted the ways in which it is regulated and regarded.

In exploring the relationship between paid sex services and citizenship we contribute to a growing body of international research at the intersection of these two fields (see for example: Bell & Binnie, 2004, 2006; Hearn, 2006; Baird, 2006). The shift in the legal status of the sex industry has implications for individual sex workers, whether working in sex services premises or in the street. This paper uses contemporary constructions of 'sexual citizenship' to frame the analysis of the contested spaces of sex workers. The emphasis is on the limits of such spaces – their boundaries and margins – and the structures of regulation and containment and resultant negotiation that set such limits (c.f. Bell, 1995). In this, we view citizenship as referring to political and social recognition granted to those whose behaviour accords with the values underpinning the construction of the nation-state (Plummer, 1999). We premise sexual citizenship as referring to sexual rights granted or denied to various social groups (Richardson, 2000), particularly sex workers in the case of this paper. Thus the paper conceptualises sexual citizenship as comprising 'varying degrees of access to a set of rights to sexual expression and consumption' (Richardson, 2000, p. 107). Specifically, these include the right to sell and buy sex (Evans, 1993; Binnie, 1995).

Yet sexual rights are contested, and the further sexual expression and consumption move from the married heterosexual model, the more they are resisted: 'citizenship is often not an adequate mechanism for protecting individuals against a repressive or authoritarian state' (Turner, 1993, p. 502). Hence the landscape of sexual citizenship is a 'lumpy' one (Bell, 1995, p. 151). Even where forms of sexual citizenship are state-sanctioned, the state can disrupt or contain such forms (Baird, 2006, p. 983). Although prostitution is now legal in such places as NSW, it is contained in ways that seek to limit its operation, particularly its spatial operation, as a normal economic activity. Some of these limits can be viewed in terms of the application of traditional town planning principles, such as removing brothels from residential areas because

of concerns such as late-night traffic and noise. But others reflect the state's need to ensure sexual behaviour outside the nuclear family norm, and challenges dominant notions of citizenship, accords with the moral values underpinning the construction of the nation-state (Plummer, 1999; Hubbard, 2001). Hence in some local government areas, sex services premises are excluded from residential areas even where they might be acceptable in terms of conventional planning controls for traffic, noise and related matters. Street workers are in a more invidious position, as they are situated in public spaces not requiring planning permission regarding use rights. The failure of street workers to meet dominant definitions of sexual morality results in denial of full sexual citizenship (c.f. Smith, 1989). Thus their use of public streets becomes an outcome that has to be negotiated with the apparatus of the state as the enforcer of public morality, whether it be with the police, local council or other agency. The sexual citizenship of home sex workers is even more repressed in some other Australian states. Thus the quintessentially 'private' site of the home is not out of the gaze of the state and the law (Hubbard, 2001).

Echoing Hubbard (2001), the paper explores how such ideas of sexual citizenship are institutionalised and contested in different places. In this, it focuses on brothels and street sex workers in Sydney, using the findings of transdisciplinary research (Wickson *et al.*, 2006). The data presented in this paper builds on the collective expertise of a broad range of research from legal studies, property and planning studies, and sociology. In particular, it draws on research data that has been collected through a variety of methods, such as archival research and interviews, in projects that explore the relationship between the sex industry in Sydney and the law (Crofts, 2003, 2006), planning and property rights (Prior, 2008; Prior & Boydell, 2008), and everyday experience (Prior & Boydell, 2008; Prior *et al.*, 2008; Prior, 2009).

The body of the paper is separated into three parts. Each part identifies positive steps towards citizenship of the sex industry as a whole and sex workers in inner Sydney: the first part outlines the law reforms that created the potential for citizenship; the part explores how local authorities in inner Sydney have sought to include the new citizenry of sex work in participatory processes; and the third notes that citizenship rights extend to the provision of a safe and violence-free working environment, analysing how local authorities have attempted to deal with this issue.

A new category of legal citizen

In this section of the paper, we outline the law reforms that created the potential for responding to and regarding the sex industry and sex workers as citizens, elaborating on the theoretical overview of (sexual) citizenship given above. The *Prostitution Act 1979* (NSW) decriminalised soliciting and afforded an unhindered right to sex work in public places in NSW. Solicitation offences are now contained in section 19 of the *Summary Offences Act 1988* (NSW), restricting areas from which solicitation is legal:

19(1) A person in a road or road related area shall not, near or within view from a dwelling, school, church or hospital, solicit another person for the purpose of prostitution.

The legal definitions of soliciting and prostitution refer not only to sex workers but to their clients as well. However, the Act has only been enforced against sex workers, not their clients. In 1999, the NSW State Government introduced section 19A, specifically targeting clients, in an attempt to address this issue. It is not known what effect, if any, section 19A has had on sex workers or their clients.

Prior to legislative reforms in 1996, brothels were illegal and subject to closure, regardless of whether or not they were well-run. In 1995, the *Disorderly Houses Amendment Act* (NSW) allowed brothels to operate as legitimate businesses. As a consequence of these reforms, local councils now have the power to regulate brothels through their planning powers, governed by the *Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979* (NSW). Accordingly, since 1996, local councils have had the power to regulate brothels through amending Local Environmental Plans and Development Control Plans

These reforms have started but not completed the process of legalisation for the sex industry. This is in part due to ambiguities within the legislative reforms (Crofts, 2003). For example, the concern about 'viewing' solicitation in the *Summary Offences Act 1988*, has been imported into the brothel planning principles outlined by Senior Commissioner Roseth in *Martyn v Hornsby* (2004):

Brothels should not adjoin areas that are zoned residential, or be clearly visible from them. Visibility is sometimes a function of distance, but not always . . .

Brothels should not adjoin, or be clearly visible from schools, educational institutions for young people or places where children and adolescents regularly gather . . .

The existence of a brothel should not be clearly visible from places where worshippers regularly gather.

The terms 'within view' or 'visibility' are open to interpretation (Roxburgh *et al.*, 2005), and can undermine the potential for the sex industry to operate legally.

Placing, involving and understanding the new citizen

The new regulations provided attendant rights for the sex industry to exist within the city's public and private domains along with other members of the citizenry. In this section of the paper, we sketch out some of the ways in which communities, local government and NSW state agencies have responded to this new right in Sydney, and to what degree they have sought to understand and take into consideration the diversity and differences of various sex industry types. Attention is drawn to the proactive way in which inner city councils and other government agencies, when faced with the ambiguity of the terms 'within view' and 'visibility', sought to develop preferred areas for solicitation so as to diffuse the ambiguity and balance the new rights of street-based sex workers with those of the broader residential population in the area. Similarly we explore how inner city councils, in contrast to many other councils across metropolitan Sydney, sought to develop planning instruments for the placement of sex services premises that were based on an understanding of the diverse amenity impacts of different types of sex services premises, ranging from commercial sex services premises to home occupations.

Following the implementation of the *Prostitution Act 1979*, which decriminalised soliciting for sex work, there existed a period of unhindered right to solicit for sex work in public places in Sydney. However, almost immediately after sex workers were provided with new rights to openly solicit for work in the streets of Darlinghurst, Kings Cross and East Sydney in 1979, territorial confrontations began to emerge between sex workers and local residents about the new rights and their implications (Perkins, 1991a, 1991b; Travis, 1986; Parliament of NSW, 1986). This tension was a major reason for the 1983 amendment of the *Prostitution Act 1979* which made soliciting in a public street, near a dwelling, school, church or hospital an offence. The purpose of this amendment was to restrict soliciting to areas which would not cause

annoyance to residents or sensitive uses. In 1988, the *Prostitution Act 1979* was repealed and replaced with the *Summary Offences Act 1988*. The new solicitation offences were very similar to those in the previously amended Prostitution Act; solicitation remained prohibited near a dwelling, school, church or hospital, although the geographical scope of the prohibition was widened to 'within view'.

In response to the locational constraints placed on soliciting for sex work in public places, street-based sex workers sought to set up 'beats' in more commercial areas of the inner city such as William Street. While the voluntary shift of many of the sex workers into more commercial areas reduced the overall level of conflict in inner Sydney, the level of ambiguity emerging from the use of the terms 'near' and 'within view' meant that no clear understanding could be drawn by council, residents and the police from the legislation about what constituted a legal territory within inner city streets for soliciting for sex work (Roxburgh *et al.*, 2005).

The vague wording of the legislation did not provide the police with certainty as to which inner city streets were legal areas for soliciting (Bligh & Rasaiah, 2001, p.18). Some residents saw street-based sex workers as part of the community or the 'colourful history' of the inner city area, and sought the liberal application of the new laws. Other groups, such as the East Sydney Neighbourhood Association (ESNA), sought to use the laws to eradicate or relocate street-based sex work to another area (ESNA, 2002) and change 'any perceived culture of the area as a homeland for the sex industry'. The ESNA argued that the prohibition on soliciting for prostitution 'near or within view from a dwelling, school, church or hospital' meant that 'there is therefore no place in East Sydney where street prostitution is legal' (ESNA, 2002). This position was extreme, given that in making the 1983 and 1988 amendments it was not the intention of Parliament to prohibit soliciting in all public areas (Bligh & Rasaiah, 2001).

However, the ESNA believed that the amendments to the Prostitution Act 1979 clearly supported their presumption of territorial rights over sex workers in a battle for the public streets of inner Sydney. As one member of the ESNA noted:

It's all about territory, and sex workers who work in the street, they honestly believe they have a right to be there, and they believe that we do not, or that we should at least make way for them. So it's a sort of a psychological warfare if you like, over territory, and that itself is very wearing (Carrick, 2002b).

These battles are not only in writing, but have also been manifested in (often violent) physical confrontations in the streetscape of inner Sydney. For example, one campaign by ESNA against the presence of sex workers on residential streets resulted in an altercation between sex workers and local residents, where assault charges were laid against a sex worker and police investigated allegations against two ESNA members (Carrick, 2002b; also see Carrick, 2002a). This altercation reflected ESNA's position that 'street sex worker[s] have developed an unfounded sense of 'territory' ... [and that] the residents are now reclaiming the streets' (ESNA, 2002).

As a result of the inherent ambiguity of 'near or within view' and resultant territorial clashes, the Kings Cross Police, City of Sydney (which includes the former South Sydney Council), the Kings Cross Chamber of Commerce and the local sex industry have sought to identify precincts as designated areas for solicitation activities associated with street-based sex work. Designated areas were first identified by the on-street Prostitution Working Party in 1992 and included commercial parts of Darlinghurst Road and William Street (Street Based Sex Work Strategy Working Party, 2006, p.4). In 2002, the South Sydney Council Street Prostitution

Working Group sought to identify alternative soliciting sites in the inner city. Thirteen inner city sites were evaluated; however, none satisfied both amenity and safety concerns (Street Based Sex Work Strategy Working Party, 2006, p.9). In a street-based sex worker strategy for inner Sydney, in 2006, legal and preferred areas were identified, which were consistent with the 1992 designated areas (Street Based Sex Work Strategy Working Party, 2006, p. 4). These preferred areas are not officially recognised in planning instruments or legislation but are part of a memorandum of agreement between the members of the working party. This research indicates that street-based sex workers in Sydney are generally aware of 'designated areas' and actively seek to work in preferred areas for safety reasons.

The Sydney City approach can be compared with other local government areas in metropolitan Sydney that have relied upon the ambiguity inherent in the legislation to interpret 'near or within view' in ways which greatly limit legally recognised locations for solicitation. These councils have restricted solicitation to isolated areas within the local government area such as industrial parks. These geographical restrictions can undermine the safety of workers and clients by situating solicitation in deserted areas, poorly lit and under supported by infrastructure. These restrictions were imposed without consultation with sex workers. This exclusion from decisions that directly affect them is informed by a belief that sex workers are not part of the community and should have no part in decision-making procedures. In contrast, the development of preferred areas, in such prominent commercial strips of inner city such as William Street and Darlinghurst Road, represent a collective attempt by local forms of governance to work in consultation with their existing and new citizenry – residents, community groups, the chamber of commerce, *and* the local sex industry and sex workers– to develop clear and appropriate public domain usage rights in the face of ambiguous state legislation.

Citizenship is not solely about individual rights and responsibilities but also about citizens' procedural opportunity to take part in decision making about the community and relevant property rights, particularly in decision making that directly affects them. The inclusive processes used by City of Sydney and other local authorities in identifying preferred areas invokes and reinforces concepts of citizenship by emphasising belonging and community. Involving the sex industry as equal citizens in decision-making processes that affect the areas in which they work assists in the likelihood of the sex industry contributing to the community and being regarded as part of the community.

As a consequence of the legislative reforms for brothels in 1995, local councils in NSW now have the power to regulate the placement of brothels in their local government area through their planning powers. Councils have responded to their responsibility for regulating the sex industry in a variety of ways. Approximately half the councils in NSW have not developed any policies with regard to brothels. These councils have relied upon state government planning principles to respond to sex services premises development applications. The remaining councils have developed planning principles that are specific to brothels.

The majority of councils that have developed sex industry-specific planning principles do not distinguish between brothel types, relying instead on (an approximation of) the definition of brothel from the *Restricted Premises Act 1943* as premises 'used by one prostitute for the purposes of prostitution'. These policies do not take into account the specific amenity impacts of different sex services premises which vary according to type and scale. Large commercial brothels may be high-volume premises, with potential amenity impacts including noise, lighting and signs (all of which can be mediated by existing commercial planning principles). In contrast, a home occupation (sex services) is likely to have little to no amenity impact, with

neighbours unlikely to even be aware of its existence. The failure to differentiate between business types is particularly problematic because the type of sex services premises that the regulations imagine are those with potentially the greatest amenity impacts – large-scale commercial brothels (Crofts, 2007). This leads to the perception that strict regulations are both required and appropriate. As a consequence, many councils in NSW have restricted brothels to commercial and/or industrial areas, and imposed strict notification requirements (Crofts, 2006). As previously stated, locating sex services premises in industrial zones raises safety issues for clients and workers and also for surrounding businesses. Only the very large commercial brothels are capable of meeting the expense of added security, notification requirements and remodelling of buildings this requires.

Home occupations (sex services) have been particularly disadvantaged by the category of 'brothel'. This is because the restriction of all brothels – that is, with one sex worker or more - to commercial and/or industrial zones effectively prevents home occupations (sex services) premises from operating legally. These regulations effectively preclude home occupations (sex services) from operating with consent in residential zones. This is extremely problematic given that it is estimated that home occupations (sex services) make up at least 40% of the sex industry (Brothels Taskforce, 2001).

In contrast, South Sydney and City of Sydney councils developed regulations that treat sex services premises as (potentially) lawful subjects (City of Sydney, 2006; Sex Service Premises Planning Advisory Council, 2004; South Sydney City Council, 2000). Accordingly, their planning regulations differentiate between sex services premises type on the basis of amenity and environmental impacts, ranging from commercial sex services premises to home occupations (City of Sydney, 2006). These policies facilitate the likelihood that sex services

premises can and will operate with development consent, thus invoking the rights and responsibilities of a legal subject.

Such attuning to the needs and impacts of sex services premises, allowing development consent to be more accurately calibrated to impacts, has the potential to benefit local communities/residents. Regarding sex services premises as legal subjects enables councils to ensure appropriate locations for specific services, taking into account and regulating amenity impacts such as parking, lighting, noise and the needs of neighbours. Such development consent also means owners are likely to invest in the long term, rather than in short-term plans aimed solely at evading detection. This encourages an investment in the community, whether for pragmatic business reasons or for ideals of civic virtue (Dagger 1997). While there may still be badly run sex services premises (like any other type of business), the plan to remain in the area for the long term has the potential to encourage the development of good relations with neighbours and aims to improve the area to attract further customers.

A safe sex industry environment for all citizens

The recognition of the sex industry as citizen carries with it attendant rights not only to access a defined place within the city for the sex industry but also a safe and violence-free working environment for those working in and visiting these environments. Accordingly, changes in the legal status of sex services premises has had implications for the citizenship of individual workers.

The legislative reforms in 1995 were motivated in part by a belief that legalisation would improve health and safety in the sex industry (Bryce Gaudry, NSW Parliamentary Debates, Legislative Assembly, 18 October 1995). The historical treatment of brothels as inherently

disorderly gave no encouragement to owners to run orderly and safe brothels. Treating sex services premises as legal entities enables the imposition and regulation of occupational health and safety requirements. This also assists access and the provision of information by health representatives such as the Department of Health and the AIDS Council of New South Wales.

An emerging body of research over the past few decades has consistently shown that those who engage in sex work, especially street-based sex work, experience high levels of violence, including violence of the most extreme kind, and are more at risk of harm than other citizens in NSW (Day, 1994; Hearn, 2006; Hubbard, 2004; Harcourt *et al.*, 2001; Kerkin, 2003, 2004).

These studies have been conducted on the sex industry in NSW, – in particular, sex workers in Sydney (Prior *et al.*, 2008; Harcourt *et al.*, 2001; Roxburgh *et al.*, 2005). As a result of the recent transformation in NSW state laws surrounding sex services premises and street-based sex work, local councils in NSW now have the potential to play a significant role through their planning instruments in creating safe work places for sex workers. In such councils as the City of Sydney and South Sydney City Council, a broad range of initiatives have been established to address the conditions that lead to high levels of violence experienced by sex workers, particularly street-based sex workers. For example, three mechanisms are used to promote and develop a safe working environment for sex workers by the City of Sydney and South Sydney City Council: (1) a detailed Sex Industry Premises Development Control Plan, which explicitly addresses occupational health and safety issues (City of Sydney, 2006; Sex Service Premises Planning Advisory Council, 2004; South Sydney City Council, 2000); (2) a policy of developing ‘safety house’ brothels (Carrick, 2002a, 2002b); and (3) the development of designated areas (Sex Service Premises Planning Advisory Council, 2004; South Sydney City Council, 2000) in highly trafficked commercial areas.

As previously mentioned, South Sydney City Council and, more recently, the City of Sydney have worked with police and local area commands to identify preferred areas for street-based sex work solicitation on streets that are in commercial and residential areas and are well-trafficked by pedestrians. The design and management of similar preferred areas in Dutch and German cities have 'alleviated problems of violence and nuisance associated with [sex work] to the benefit of both [sex worker] and local residents' (Street Based Sex Work Strategy Working Party, 2006, p. 14). The creation of preferred locations can be beneficial for a broad range of issues beyond violence reduction. They allow health outreach services to more easily access workers for the provision of information and health and welfare services, reduce impacts on residents by reducing the need for clients to search a wider area looking for workers, and allow police to establish good relationships with local sex workers.

While well-trafficked, preferred locations are an important contribution to the safety of street-based sex work, the strategy that is most clearly relevant to the safety and amenity of street sex workers themselves is the innovative establishment of 'safe house' brothels. Safe house brothels are privately owned commercial premises which provide short-term room rental to clients to enable the provision of sexual services by a sex worker. The establishment of legally recognised safe house brothels, first in South Sydney City Council and later in the City of Sydney, provides sex workers with a cheap, easily accessible, legal, clean and safe environment to service their clients. This means that workers have less need to risk their safety by getting into a client's vehicle or conducting services in other isolated private venues (Roxburgh *et al.*, 2005). A study by Harcourt *et al.* (2001) found that 42% of workers opted to use a safe house whenever possible. A recent unpublished study (Street Based Sex Work Strategy Working Party, 2006) indicates that most street-based sex workers conducted their services in safe house brothels at least some of the time. The same study indicated that both

street-based sex workers in Sydney and their clients had a strong preference for providing/receiving services in safe house brothels rather than other locations because safe house brothels are seen as safe, clean, convenient, comfortable, legal and with less likelihood of clients being picked up by police.

Concluding Remarks

This paper has drawn upon the idea of citizenship in recognition of the (gradual) change in status of the sex industry from the criminal to the legal in Sydney. The paper considered the way in which select inner city local authorities have worked to extend this citizenship in terms of rights – to place, involvement and safety – and social inclusion. In extending citizenship, these inner city councils also sought to understand sex industry premises, their diversity of scale and, consequently, their diversity of impacts.

Available research suggests that good regulation of the sex industry, such as the approaches adopted by Sydney City and South Sydney councils detailed above, will reduce the (perceived) negative impact of the sex industry upon the community. In other words, the treatment of the sex industry as citizen will enable and encourage the sex industry as a whole, as well as individual sex workers to become good neighbours. Further research is needed to clarify several aspects of this hypothesis, including what ‘good regulation’ of the sex industry might mean. Moreover, research is needed on the concept of the ‘good neighbour’ in terms of different local government zones and rights to the public and private domains of the city. To this end, we are currently researching the regulation of the sex industry, including street sex work, home occupations, safety houses and commercial sex services premises, and the (perceived) ways in which this regulation allows the sex industry to be a positive part of the community.

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