

8. Two to Tango

This information sheet is part of a series prepared for the Sex Industry Decriminalisation Action Committee (SIDAC) to support the decriminalisation of sex work in South Australia in 2019

Clients of sex workers are men, women and everyone in between who visit sex workers for many reasons, sometimes just because it is fun. Others deal with emotional or other needs. These personal statements were offered to SIDAC for the 2019 decriminalisation campaign.

PATRICK

A beautiful friend who was a sex worker helped me from a dark place.

She reminded me that intimacy and compassion can be real.

She knew that the mind as well as the body can be touched.

She will not be owned. She demanded that I recognise her worth ... and is probably the most honest person I know.

We didn't have sex.

CHENG

I have cerebral palsy and have been a client of sex workers since 2014. Besides being guides to sex and intimacy, a part of life many people with disabilities may not have the opportunity to explore, these wonderful people help me cope with loneliness and connect with another person ... if only temporarily.

I don't have confidence in forming romantic relationships and don't deserve to be prosecuted for paying someone to relieve me of that pain. Nor should sex workers be stigmatised and criminalised for offering such a service.

We all have the right to make informed decisions about our mental, physical and emotional wellbeing. If not for sex workers, those aspects of my life would be in much worse shape and I would not be writing to you today. Every sex worker whose company I have enjoyed has seen me of their own free will. I have in turn accepted their terms and done everything to ensure they feel safe and at ease in my company.

This is not criminal behaviour, but consenting adults agreeing to spend time together for mutual benefit.

TONY

In my early 20's I sustained a catastrophic spinal cord injury that changed virtually every aspect of my life. I spent 4 months relearning how to do everyday tasks.

I was single at the time and at first was envious of other patients who had partners to support them during their rehabilitation.

I envied them because a spinal cord injury almost always results in sexual dysfunction of some kind and I thought that at least they would be able to explore what forms of sexual expression were still possible for them.

I witnessed as these relationships failed because everything had become 'too difficult'. Virtually all the young patients I knew became single before leaving and the staff said this was common.



After many years of unsuccessfully asking girls out on dates (a problem I didn't have prior to my injury), I decided to book a sex worker to figure out what I could and couldn't still do.

Online forums showed me that it is common for newly disabled people to book a professional to gain sexual confidence to start dating again.

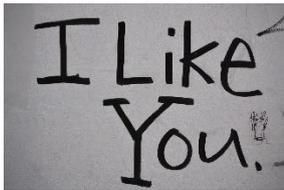
I had a wonderful first experience and now book sex workers regularly.

All have been kind, caring and empathetic - they have improved my life in many ways. They deserve the same rights and protections as workers in any other industry and I strongly support decriminalisation.

MARCO

My name is Mark and I'm 34 ... and as far as I'm concerned, that's 34 years too long.

My life can be summed up by the Nirvana song, I hate myself and I want to die. 1997 was the last time I felt truly happy. I would wake up thinking: is this the day I die? ... and hoping it was. A dear friend was there for me and saved my life. She went with me when my dad booked me in to see a doctor. This happened ten years ago and I have been in therapy and taking anti-depressants ever since. My life is a mess but at least it's not as big a mess as what it used to be. I was struggling to deal with my loneliness.



Ever since high school I had wanted a romantic relationship, but it had never happened. Watching my friends getting married and having kids made me feel sad. I was driving myself crazy thinking about love and sex all the time and was losing focus on healing. My therapist suggested that I should see a sex worker.

At first the idea repulsed me. I wasn't a Christian anymore, so I wasn't worried about sinning, but I thought that only losers and perverts went to sex workers.

I was nervous and didn't know what to expect when I went ... but felt like I had just been in heaven when I left. I had never been with a woman, never been intimate with someone or kissed and cuddled. The sexual aspect of what we did was something I had never experienced. It was amazing, but it's what happened after that touched my heart. I put my mask on and pretended that everything was okay. Somehow, she could tell that I had depression and anxiety.

She asked me about it and that's when I broke down and started crying.

She held me close and I felt so safe in her arms that I let my guard down, took my mask off completely and started telling her about my problems. She was kind, understanding and compassionate ... and that made me feel so special. I started to see her once a month. It was a form of therapy, but it was better because she would hold me and just make me feel like I was worth something. I felt safe and my confidence grew. She helped me to slowly come out of my shell and become more confident in myself and in the world. I started volunteering, I started learning martial arts and got myself a part time job.

When she decided to move on after a few years, I felt I did not need to see a sex worker. I lasted a while, but things started to get on top of me, so I decided to see a sex worker again. I have been seeing this lady for a few years - she is kind and understanding and makes me feel important ... that I'm not so bad after all.

Like everyone, I need intimacy. Seeing a sex worker satisfies my sexual needs but it also gives me a place to escape my problems. She helps me calm down. Sometimes things are so hard that I break down and she holds me close and comforts me. She tells me I'm special and beautiful and it makes me feel a little better about myself.

I used to think that seeing a sex worker was wrong, that they were bad people. She taught me the truth: that sex workers are good people who help lonely people feel happy. They provide an important and needed service.

Seeing a sex worker is the right thing for me to do and I don't care what anyone else thinks. Maybe one day I will find true love but I'm not holding my breath. I still feel ugly and worthless but at least I'm better than what I used to be.



