



**FAMILY VIOLENCE REFORM IMPLEMENTATION MONITOR**  
**Monitoring the Family Violence Reforms**

**Project Respect Submission**

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## **Acknowledgments**

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## **About Project Respect**

Project Respect is an intersectional feminist organisation, which provides support for women in the sex industry and women trafficked for sexual exploitation. We outreach to licensed brothels across the Greater Melbourne Region to provide women with information about their rights and where they can access support.

Our vision is a world where women are free from trafficking, sexual exploitation, violence, and harm. Our primary mission is to support women in the sex industry and women trafficked and advocate for the structural change needed to end all forms of sexual exploitation. We provide a platform to elevate and amplify the voices of women with lived experience.

## **Executive Summary**

Project Respect welcomes this opportunity to provide feedback to the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitory and congratulates the government for its ongoing effort to address violence against women in Victoria. Project Respect recognises that not all women in the sex industry experience violence, exploitation or harm. However, based on our work with women, and the experiences of women we support, discrimination, violence and exploitation of women in the sex industry is significant, widespread and harmful.

Family violence has particular and profound impacts on women who have experience of the sex industry. Violence is perpetrated against women in the sex industry in the full range of ways it is perpetrated against women in the broader community, and there is evidence that women in the sex industry experience family violence at higher rates than other women in the Australian community.

There is work to be done to advance understanding of the intersection of family violence, women in the sex industry and human trafficking. Project Respect's work with women trafficked for sexual exploitation reveals that often, women will experience multiple forms of abuse. Human trafficking, and especially trafficking for sexual exploitation involves the same dynamics of power and control present in patterns of domestic violence and sexual assault. These complex forms of abuse frequently go unrecognised by police, specialist family violence services, and other parts of the community service system, leaving women already at heightened risk of harm, without limited access to the support.

## **A note on case studies**

All names have been changed and identifying details removed.

## Summary of Recommendations

1. The Victorian Government adequately funds organisations that are supporting women in the sex industry.
2. The Victorian Government adequately funds organisations that are supporting survivors of trafficking.
3. Women with experience of the sex industry are considered a high-risk group to experience family violence.
4. Women with experience of the sex industry are included within the MARAM framework, and risk assessments are developed that include their unique indicators of risk.
5. That coercive control and substance-use coercion are recognised as forms of family violence with a specific and unique impact on women with experience of the sex industry and women trafficked.
6. Women trafficked are included in family violence reforms.
7. Research into technology-facilitated abuse for women in the sex industry is undertaken.
8. The Family Violence Protection Act 2008 Part 2- Interpretations (s)5 Meaning of family violence be amended to include examples of specific forms of family violence that are perpetrated towards women with experience of the sex industry that are also considered offences in the Sex Work Act 1994 including:
  - a. Being forced to work in the sex industry
  - b. Not allowing a woman to leave the sex industry
  - c. Being forced to provide sexual services in their homes
  - d. Threats to or outing a woman's involvement in the industry
9. The Family Violence Protection Act 2008 Part 2- Interpretations (s)6 Meaning of economic abuse needs to be amended to include an example of the specific forms of economic abuse experienced by people involved in the sex industry including:
  - a. Being forced to work in the sex industry
  - b. Not allowing a woman to leave the sex industry
10. The Family Violence Protection Act 2008 Part 2- Interpretations (s)7 meaning of emotional and psychological abuse needs to be amended to include an example of the specific forms of emotional and psychological abuse experienced by people involved in the sex industry including:
  - a. Threats to or outing a woman's involvement in the industry
11. The social, community and welfare sector undertake capacity-building training on supporting women with experience of the sex industry and the unique barriers they experience when accessing support.
12. The social, community and welfare sector undertake capacity-building training raise awareness of the experiences of migrant women engaging in the sex industry including those experiencing exploitation and modern slavery.
13. The Victorian Government provide specific transitional housing for:
  - a. women with experience of the sex industry to ensure they are not further stigmatised and the housing is appropriate to their needs and circumstances
  - b. women who have been trafficked who are unable to access the Commonwealth funded Support for Trafficked People program
  - c. women on temporary visas experiencing housing instability and/or violence

- d. women wishing to make a transition from the sex industry to ensure they are able to make a sustainable transition, reducing the likelihood of oscillating in and out of the industry as an outcome of housing insecurity.
14. The Victorian Government ensure eligibility requirements for support services do not disempower women on temporary visas.
  15. The Victorian Government introduces COVID-19 payment and subsidies that includes women in the sex industry on temporary visas.
  16. The Victorian Government prevent law enforcement from criminalising the provision of sexual services under quarantine laws.

## Context for this submission

### A profile of the sex industry

The sex industry in Australia is regulated at a state and territory level, and there is a patchwork of different regulation across the country from decriminalisation, regulation and full criminalisation. The industry has both formal spaces such as brothels and escorting and informal (illegal) spaces such as street based, massage parlours and provision of sexual services from private spaces such as apartments and motels.

There are currently 89 licensed brothels and more than 600 owner-operated licensed sex industry businesses in Victoria. Further, there is an estimate of 500 massage parlours offering unregistered sexual services, and an unknown quantity of women involved in informal (illegal) spaces such as street based and provision of sexual services from private spaces such as apartments and motels.

Data on people involved in the sex industry is very difficult to obtain, due to the stigma, discrimination and criminality of the industry. Research which is available generally focuses on the licensed/regulated space. However, from the limited data available, and based on data from our 20 year history of outreaching to licensed brothels in Victoria, we observe that the sex industry is mostly comprised of women, with a large migrant workforce population, particularly women on temporary visas.

### The intersection of the sex industry and family violence

The Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence found that women enter the sex industry as a cause and consequence of family violence, often seeking access to an income when leaving a violent partner or being forced in to the industry to earn an income while with a partner who uses violence. The Royal Commission also heard women who work in the sex industry are disproportionately affected by family violence and noted the compounding nature of experiencing violence in the work setting, as well as in their personal lives and how this, and potentially childhood violence could lead to a normalising of violence. The impact of family violence on their health and wellbeing could be particularly severe and could impede their recovery. The Royal Commission report found women face particular challenges when seeking support before, during and after experiencing violence, compounded by the stigma and discrimination they experience due to their involvement in the sex industry, often making women feel invisible within the service system.

Data collected by Project Respect in the 2018/2019 financial year revealed that three-quarters of women individually supported by the organisation indicated that they were currently or had previously experienced family violence.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, in addition to well recognised indicators of family and domestic violence, women in the sex industry report that they experience violence in other specific ways, most commonly:

- Being forced by their partner into the sex industry; not being allowed to exit the industry
- Having their wages from the sex industry taken from them by their partner

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<sup>1</sup> Project Respect Annual Report 2019

[https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/projectrespect/pages/21/attachments/original/1574469574/Project\\_Respect\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2019.pdf?1574469574](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/projectrespect/pages/21/attachments/original/1574469574/Project_Respect_Annual_Report_2019.pdf?1574469574) p. 13

- Being threatened by their partner disclosing or threatening to disclose that they are or have previously worked in the sex industry to others, including to their children, other family members, friends, children's teachers or school, employers, the police, Child Protection, the Children's Court, the Magistrates Court, the Family Court and the Australian Taxation Office
- Experiencing verbal abuse from their partner or ex-partner in terms of their involvement in the sex industry (e.g., calling them a 'whore' or a 'slut')
- Being coerced by their partner into having unwanted sex or types of sex, including with partner's friends
- Substance-use coercion.

### Case Study: Substance-use coercion

Tracy\* is Australian born and experienced mental health issues and a dependence to substances. During a stay in a rehabilitation facility, she met a much older man, Tony. He introduced her to heroin, and she quickly developed a dependence.

Tracy and Tony did not have access to an income to support their drug dependency. Tony told Tracy that she could earn an income by selling sex on the street. She commenced doing this, and all money earned was controlled by Tony. At times, Tracy also had to earn money to support Tony's friends' dependency to drugs. A little while into the relationship, Tony met another, younger woman. He also facilitated her dependency to heroin, and, once this had happened, asked her to work on the street for him as well.

It was later that Tracy understood that this was a distinct pattern of behaviour that Tony had where he preyed on the vulnerability of younger women to earn an income from them selling sex, primarily to support his own drug dependency.

## How has the family violence service system changed since the Royal Commission?

- **What are the major changes in the family violence service system since the Royal Commission into Family Violence made its final report and recommendations in 2016?**

Project Respect congratulates the state government's recognition of the risks and barriers women in the sex industry experiencing violence face, through the inclusion of people in the sex industry as one of twelve diverse communities who face additional barriers to seeking support in the *Everybody Matters: Inclusion and Equity Statement: The Victorian Government's 10-year vision for a more inclusive, safe, responsive and accountable family violence system*. Sustained progress around understanding the impacts of violence that women in the sex industry experience, both in and outside of the context of work is required to continue the positive trajectory in making a more inclusive and safe system for women to be able to report their experiences of violence.

In 2019, the Victorian government announced its *Review to make recommendations for the decriminalisation of sex work*. The consultation process for this review has now closed. Project Respect is eagerly awaiting the outcome of this review, but reiterates that the decriminalisation of sex work is only a small component of removing barriers to reporting violence. Much more needs to be done to protect and prevent women in the sex industry from experiencing violence.

- **How has the experience of accessing services and support changed since the Royal Commission for victim survivors, including children, and perpetrators of family violence?**

There has been little change in the experience of women in the sex industry in accessing services and support since the Royal Commission. In particular, Project Respect is disappointed by the omission of women in the sex industry in the resources, supporting materials, and risk assessments released under the MARAM framework. This is despite recognition that women in the sex industry face unique risks

Project Respect's work sits at the intersection of human trafficking and family violence, with a common factor of women being involved in the sex industry. Our work demonstrates that there is more to be done to advance understanding of this intersection and to explicitly recognise that women in the sex industry will likely experience multiple forms of abuse, including family violence.

### **Looking forward – what is still required in the family violence system**

- **What are the most critical changes to the family violence service system that still need to occur?**

#### **Recommendations**

1. The Victorian Government adequately funds organisations that are supporting women in the sex industry.
2. The Victorian Government adequately funds organisations that are supporting survivors of trafficking.
3. Women with experience of the sex industry are considered a high-risk group to experience family violence.
4. Women with experience of the sex industry are included within the MARAM framework, and risk assessments are developed that include their unique indicators of risk, including:
  - a. Coercive control and substance-use coercion recognised as forms of family violence with a specific and unique impact on women with experience of the sex industry and women trafficked.
5. Women trafficked are included in family violence reforms.
6. The family violence service sector undertakes training on supporting women with experience of the sex industry and women trafficked
7. Research into technology-facilitated abuse for women in the sex industry is undertaken.
8. The Family Violence Protection Act 2008 Part 2- Interpretations (s)5 Meaning of family violence be amended to include examples of specific forms of family violence that are perpetrated towards women with experience of the sex industry that are also considered offences in the Sex Work Act 1994 including:
  - a. Being forced to work in the sex industry
  - b. Not allowing a woman to leave the sex industry
  - c. Being forced to provide sexual services in their homes
  - d. Threats to or outing a woman's involvement in the industry

9. The Family Violence Protection Act 2008 Part 2- Interpretations (s)6 Meaning of economic abuse needs to be amended to include an example of the specific forms of economic abuse experienced by people involved in the sex industry including:
  - a. Being forced to work in the sex industry
  - b. Not allowing a woman to leave the sex industry
10. The Family Violence Protection Act 2008 Part 2- Interpretations (s)7 meaning of emotional and psychological abuse needs to be amended to include an example of the specific forms of emotional and psychological abuse experienced by people involved in the sex industry including:
  - a. Threats to or outing a woman's involvement in the industry

Despite growing evidence women in the sex industry are at higher risk of experiencing family violence than other women in the Australian community they remain largely absent from the reform agenda and are unrecognised under the MARAM framework.

There is also work to be done that considers the role of technology and the experience of women in the sex industry. The sex industry is unusual in relation to technology facilitated abuse, as few other industries or work places require sexual interactions. The nature of the industry inevitably makes women in the sex industry more vulnerable to technology facilitated abuse than might be experienced by women in other industries. Our work reveals that technology-facilitated abuse impacts on women in the sex industry in four distinct ways: in the context of family violence, with clients, in their role as independent business operators and, in the context of women trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Often the abuse plays out through threats to out and/or expose women by intimate partners or clients who have images or video footage taken without consent during a booking. Further, we have supported women who have had adverts for services and their phone numbers posted online without consent. Research suggests that the trauma related to technology-facilitated abuse increases as time goes on, as the threat to expose someone remains.

- **Are there any parts of the family violence reforms that have not yet progressed enough and require more attention?**

## Recommendations

11. The social, community and welfare sector undertake capacity-building training on supporting women with experience of the sex industry and the unique barriers they experience when accessing support.
12. The social, community and welfare sector undertake capacity-building training raise awareness of the experiences of migrant women engaging in the sex industry including those experiencing exploitation and modern slavery.
13. The Victorian Government provide specific transitional housing for:
  - a. women with experience of the sex industry to ensure they are not further stigmatised and the housing is appropriate to their needs and circumstances
  - b. women who have been trafficked who are unable to access the Commonwealth funded Support for Trafficked People program
  - c. women on temporary visas experiencing housing instability and/or violence

- d. women wishing to make a transition from the sex industry to ensure they are able to make a sustainable transition, reducing the likelihood of oscillating in and out of the industry as an outcome of housing insecurity.
14. The Victorian Government ensure eligibility requirements for support services do not disempower women on temporary visas.

As stated in the Royal Commission report “There are serious shortcomings in how police and the family violence system respond to the experience of women who work in the sex industry. In light of this, the Commission recommends that Victoria Police amend its Code of Practice for the Investigation of Family Violence to describe the additional challenges faced by women who work in the sex industry when reporting family violence to the police, and how to provide support when investigating family violence perpetrated against these women.”<sup>2</sup>

Although Recommendation 186 has been implemented, there is still work to be done to combat the stigma and discrimination experienced by women in the sex industry when accessing safety and support in the family violence and wider community service system. Knowledge

### Case Study: Stigma and discrimination of women in the sex industry reporting violence

Ava\*, a woman in her late twenties, from central Asia, experienced trafficking and sexual exploitation in her country of origin and was forced into the sex industry by her parents at a very early age. She left her country of origin to remove herself from this exploitation. Ava came to Australia on a student visa. Due to a lack of options available, and because she was familiar with it, Ava worked in the sex industry in Australia while studying. Ava struggled to obtain private rental but was able to obtain share house accommodation. However, whilst living in the share house Ava was sexually exploited by multiple perpetrators.

She was involuntarily hospitalized due to trauma induced psychosis. Services, including police and family violence services expressed doubts relating to her story due to her involvement in the sex industry and the number of sexual assaults she had experienced. They had no understanding of the normalisation of violence women with experience of the sex industry sometimes experience, or any awareness of the indicators of human trafficking indicators.

During the hospital admission Ava met another perpetrator who befriended her. He offered her accommodation, which, given she had nowhere to go when she was discharged, and due to previous difficulties in securing private accommodation, she accepted. This perpetrator domestically trafficked Ava for sexual exploitation. Given previous poor responses by services, Ava was too scared to report the situation as she didn’t know what would happen to her, or where she would go.

Finally, she reported the exploitation to Project Respect but she did not want to report to the police. Due to existing relationships, Project Respect was able to support Ava into family violence crisis accommodation. However, as an outcome of ongoing sexual exploitation, Ava exhibited sexualised behaviour. Staff did not apply an intersectional lens and judged her as being unsafe around children due to her involvement in the sex industry and did not want her in the shared crisis accommodation with other women and children. Ava was moved between different motels and crisis sites which

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<sup>2</sup> State of Victoria, Royal Commission into Family Violence: Summary and recommendations, Parl Paper No 132 (2014–16)

exposed her to a third perpetrator. Ava's temporary visa status means she is not eligible for government housing or any type of government support and it limits her ability to access services.

With the support of Project Respect, Ava has been accepted into medium term housing where she is also provided a financial allowance and meals. This is assisting Ava to recover safely, while also not forcing her to return to the sex industry while she recovers from the sexual trauma.

This housing arrangement has been fostered outside of usual eligibility requirements. Ava currently has an application for a protection visa submitted, however it could be years until Ava receives an outcome of her visa status, until this point Ava will remain in medium term/transitional housing.

Migrant women face additional complexities, and in particular, a temporary visa status can be utilised as a means of control over women in the sex industry, particularly if women are in the illegal space or where they have specific working restrictions on their visa. Visa status is used to further exploit women through threats to "dob them in" to ensure they do not report the situation or seek support.

Furthermore, housing insecurity is an ongoing issue for women in the sex industry, and is one of the most common issues women present with when seeking support from the organisation, and one of the most frequent topics discussed with women when we are outreaching to licensed brothels.

Many of the women Project Respect support are impacted by homelessness, housing instability, insecure interim and short-term forms of housing, or housing which does not adequately meet their needs. Women in the sex industry face barriers such as temporary visa status and stigma and discrimination in accessing the broad range of housing options, including public, community, temporary, emergency and private housing. Often, these barriers intersect leading to situations of increased vulnerability.

## **Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic**

- **What has been the biggest impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on your organisation or sector? How have the services that your organisation or sector provides had to change?**

The onset of COVID-19 has revealed a significant impact on the women Project Respect supports, through mass loss of jobs, whether that be in the licensed sex industry, informal sex industry spaces such as massage parlours or, for women we have assisted to transition from the industry in to other employment, in other service sector spaces.

For many women the COVID-19 pandemic has coincided with the onset or escalation of violence and abuse. A report released by the AIC revealed that two-thirds of women had experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former cohabiting partner since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the violence had started or escalated in the previous 3 months. Although the experience of women in the sex industry was not included in the report, data indicated that of the 15,000 responses, 2.2% of respondents were forced to take part in sexual activity against their will, and that there is a high co-occurrence of women reporting that they experience both coercive control and physical or sexual

violence.<sup>3</sup> Project Respect's work during this time has revealed women in the sex industry are facing additional challenges as a result of the pandemic, exacerbating the risk of experiencing violence during this time.

As many specialist family violence services are stating, social isolation is a contributing factor to increased risk in experiencing family and domestic violence. For women with experience of the sex industry, these risks are exacerbated by:

- A lack of and loss of income preventing women from leaving violent partners to have access to basic necessities such as housing and food
- The likelihood that the provision of sexual services will continue but will be driven further underground. This increases the risk of women experiencing workplace violence including sexual assault and places them at greater health risks, including transmission of the virus
- Due to stigma, discrimination and the current restrictive measures in place, women will be less likely to report the violence or health risks
- An environment for women to be trafficked or re-trafficked, as they take greater risks to secure a source of income

In Victoria, where quarantine measures are still in operation, there have been reports of brothel owners requesting women to "return to work", and that brothels are continuing to operate by renting out a number of apartment rooms in different locations, meaning that women may be moved across many sites. Escort services have continued to operate, unabated, during this time.

As with all aspects of health, the ability of women in the sex industry to protect themselves against COVID-19 depends on their individual and interpersonal behaviours, their work environment, the availability of community support, access to health and social services, and broader aspects of the legal and economic environment. Stigma and criminalisation mean that women might not seek, or be eligible for, government-led social protection or other economic initiatives. Police arrests, fines, and other media reports are fuelling concerns that the pandemic is intensifying stigma, discrimination, and repressive policing. This has been revealed by reporting in Victoria that has focussed overwhelmingly on the role of the woman in providing sexual services during quarantine, rather than the purchaser of services or on brothel owners and managers.

- **Has the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted any strengths or weaknesses in the family violence service system?**

## Recommendations

15. The Victorian Government introduces COVID-19 payment and subsidies that includes women in the sex industry on temporary visas.
16. The Victorian Government prevent law enforcement from criminalising the provision of sexual services under quarantine laws.

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<sup>3</sup> Boxall H, Morgan A & Brown R 2020. The prevalence of domestic violence among women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Statistical Bulletin no. 28. Canberra: Australian Institute of Criminology. <https://www.aic.gov.au/publications/sb/sb28>

Ultimately, the onset of COVID-19 has further served to highlight the invisibility of women in the sex industry in government initiatives to prevent violence against all women in Australia. This is all compounded by the fact the government package to assist people who have lost their jobs does not consider women on temporary visas. More than 60% of the women Project Respect supports are from migrant backgrounds, and approximately 40% of the women supported are on temporary visas, meaning that many women are without the ability to access any government benefits at all.

## General comments

### The intersection of family violence for women in the sex industry and women trafficked

Project Respect's work sits at the intersection of human trafficking and family violence, with a common factor of women being involved in the sex industry. Our work demonstrates that there is more to be done to advance understanding of this intersection and to explicitly recognise that women in the sex industry will likely experience multiple forms of abuse, including forced marriage, family violence, and sexual violence.

A 2014 Australian Institute of Criminology report confirmed that "marriage and partner migration have been used to facilitate the trafficking of people to Australia."<sup>4</sup> This research drew on data and interviews relating to 8 specific cases and highlighted that cases were often misidentified as domestic violence.<sup>5</sup> A 2017 InTouch Report analysed 300 client files closed between 2015–16 and involved clients whose migration status was temporary when they first came into contact with InTouch. Of the 300 audited files, 11 had indicators of human trafficking, 20 involved discernible evidence of forced labour and servitude, and deceptive recruiting for the purpose of these offences, with four of these 20 cases specifically relating to sexual servitude. While this equates to approximately 10% of the audited files, the report indicates this is likely to be an underrepresentation of the prevalence of the crime as not all cases audited had sufficient detail to identify indicators of trafficking. Of the 31 cases identified, only 11 were referred to the AFP.<sup>6</sup> Both the AIC and InTouch reports detail that the family violence service system has limited awareness of modern slavery, and as such are unskilled to identify, respond or refer.

This information supports Project Respect's own anecdotal evidence received from the family violence service sector as an outcome of our capacity-building in Victoria, and our advocacy nationally. A number of training participants have indicated that, after learning about the indicators of trafficking, realised they had supported victim/survivors of trafficking. Additionally, we have been informed that refugees in Australia often have women trafficked on spousal visas and even when staff do identify there are indicators of trafficking, they don't have the skills to engage women to open up about their experiences.

This lack of knowledge about modern slavery has been documented in the 2009 AIC Community Attitudes and Awareness Survey across Australia in relation to human trafficking. Only 9% of respondents correctly defined trafficking and 75% of respondents believed they would not be able to

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<sup>4</sup> S Lyneham & K Richards, Human trafficking involving marriage and partner migration to Australia, in, AIC Reports Research And Public Policy Series 124, Canberra, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2014.p. ix

<sup>5</sup> S Lyneham & K Richards, p. xi

<sup>6</sup> Segrave, Marie, Temporary Migration and Family Violence: An analysis of victimisation, vulnerability and support, Melbourne, School of Social Sciences, Monash University, 2017

identify a trafficked person.<sup>7</sup> The need and scope for capacity-building training as well as community awareness raising activities amongst family violence services are key recommendations in the AIC Report.<sup>8</sup> This need for training is supported by Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria's 2017 survey with 367 people across Victoria working in the family violence sector, of which 25% of the respondents indicated that they required training on "identifying and working with women who have been trafficked". More specifically, the 2017 InTouch Report recommends that family violence services include specialised risk assessment tools for immigrant and refugee, and temporary migrant women, and that collaborative service provision model should be developed to adequately support victim/survivors.

Further, the need for training is evidenced in our own training evaluation (n=219), where 22% of participants had no baseline knowledge, and 51% indicated low knowledge to the evaluation question "*how would you rate your ability to explain the components of human trafficking as well as the indicators and support pathways?*" Additionally, in surveys undertaken with participants on their experiences of supporting women who presented with indicators of trafficking, 19 frontline workers reported supporting 53 women who had been trafficked or showed indicators of trafficking in the last 12 months, and none had received any specialist training on identifying and supporting people who had been trafficked. Only 3 had received specialist training on sexual assault and sexual trauma.<sup>9</sup> In the last financial year, participants (n=137) who attended a Project Respect full day training workshop indicated that they had provided support to more than 745 people involved in the sex industry, and believed they have supported more than 107 people who showed signs of or were trafficked, however, only 6% (n=8) of participants had received specialised training.

As evidenced by the above, women in the sex industry are largely missing from prevention of violence against women initiatives and strategies. This absence results in a lack of broader public and social policy planning and responses to these forms of violence against this specific group of women. As a result, these intersecting forms of violence frequently go unrecognised by police, specialist family violence services, and other parts of the community services system, leaving women already at heightened risk for harm, without any access to the support.

### Case Study: Intersection of the sex industry, human trafficking and family violence

Chen\* is a mature woman from a South East Asian country. She is divorced and has two children who are living with a former partner in Asia. She met her new partner online and moved to Australia to be with him, at her partner's request, and they married. She agreed to move to Australia under the promise to be in an equal and respectful partnership. Soon after she arrived in Australia, she experienced serious forms of family violence and other forms of exploitation. Her partner was severely violent towards her. One of these assaults resulted in a neighbour contacting the local police, and the police removed Chen from the situation.

Chen was isolated, spoke little English and was completely under her partner's control. She had to be

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<sup>7</sup> J Larsen et al., Trafficking in persons monitoring report: January 2009–June 2011. Monitoring reports No. 19., in, Canberra, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2012, p. 19 <<https://aic.gov.au/publications/mr/mr19>> [accessed 20 June 2018]

<sup>8</sup> S Lyneham & K Richards, p. xii

<sup>9</sup> Segrave, p. 72

available 24/7. This included work without being paid in the perpetrators business (labour exploitation), forced to do all the household work and other domestic duties (domestic servitude) and, provide sexual services to her partner multiple times a day against her consent (sexual exploitation). If she refused, he raped her, including strangulation. She was denied food and when her children visited they also were denied food and adequate living conditions.

The perpetrator allowed her to earn an income through the sex industry to provide food and other basic necessities for herself and her children. Her children were supposed to stay in Australia with her, but her partner would not allow them to travel back to Australia, and then used threats against them to make Chen stay in Australia with him.

Chen reported the crimes perpetrated against her to the local police and her case was investigated as family violence. Her partner was sentenced to three months for family violence offences. In Chen's case, human trafficking indicators were not recognised by local police. We believe that if human trafficking indicators had been taken into account, Chen's case would not solely have been treated as family violence, the sentence could have been much longer and Chen could have potentially had access to the Support for Trafficked People Program which would have provided the wrap around support required to be safely removed from the situation of exploitation and violence. When the perpetrator was released from jail, Chen's safety was gravely at risk, compounded by her temporary visa status which restricted her access to other support services.