

## Call for input on the use of technology in facilitating and preventing contemporary forms of slavery

*Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and its consequences*

April 21 2023

### **Evidence of modern technology being used to recruit and subject people to contemporary forms of slavery in Australia**

In Australia, sex trafficking is fuelled by increased demand for paid sexual services as a result of decriminalisation, legalisation, and overall deregulation of the sex industry.

According to Victorian service Project Respect:

*“Legitimizing the sex industry in Victoria makes it an attractive market for human traffickers and crime syndicates. We are unsure of the scale of the issue in the illegal sex industry, but 500 illegal brothels who remain largely untouched suggests that a large number of women could be experiencing slavery and slavery-like conditions.”<sup>1</sup>*

Demand is not met by local women who are mostly unwilling to work in the sex industry. Australian men frequently seek out women who are young, inexperienced, and of Asian background.<sup>2</sup>

The majority of trafficked people identified by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) in recent years are women from Asian countries.<sup>3</sup> Reports to the AFP of sexual exploitation doubled

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<sup>1</sup> Project Respect. Position Statement: Illegal Brothels. [https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/projectrespect/pages/15/attachments/original/1504666071/01062017\\_Position\\_Statement\\_Illegal\\_Brothels\\_-\\_FINAL.pdf?1504666071](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/projectrespect/pages/15/attachments/original/1504666071/01062017_Position_Statement_Illegal_Brothels_-_FINAL.pdf?1504666071). Note: The involvement of crime bosses known to be powerful and ruthless renders it unlikely that researchers could get a clear picture of the industry.

<sup>2</sup> Norma, Caroline (31 Mar 2021). Australia’s history of outsourcing sexual abuse to Asian women. *ABC Religion and Ethics*. <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/australia-outsourcing-sexual-abuse-to-asian-women/13284728> See also: Collective Shout and CATWA (8 Mar 2022). Joint Report: Side Hustles and Sexual Exploitation: Australian news media reporting and commentary on the sex industry during the COVID-19 pandemic. [https://www.collectiveshout.org/side\\_hustles\\_and\\_sexual\\_exploitation](https://www.collectiveshout.org/side_hustles_and_sexual_exploitation); Collective Shout (19 Oct 2021). Submission to the Department of Justice and Community and Safety: Decriminalising sex work in Victoria August 2021. [https://www.collectiveshout.org/submission\\_decriminalising\\_sex\\_work\\_vic\\_august\\_2021](https://www.collectiveshout.org/submission_decriminalising_sex_work_vic_august_2021); Tankard Reist, Melinda (25 Aug 2021). Men’s paid sexual access to women given stamp of approval: Victorian Government decriminalises pimping and sex buying. [https://www.collectiveshout.org/submission\\_decriminalising\\_sex\\_work\\_vic\\_august\\_2021](https://www.collectiveshout.org/submission_decriminalising_sex_work_vic_august_2021)

<sup>3</sup> Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement (18 Jul 2017). An inquiry into human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices: report: Parliament of Australia, Analysis and Policy Observation. <https://apo.org.au/node/99476>

between 2017 and 2020.<sup>4</sup> Commercial sexual exploitation is the most profitable segment of human trafficking.<sup>5</sup>

The US Department of State reports that Australia remains a destination country for sex trafficking.<sup>6</sup> Home Affairs Minister Clare O’Neil declared Australia’s migration system broken, with widespread visa rorting linked to sex trafficking, foreign worker exploitation, and drug crime.<sup>7</sup>

Australian sex industry advocates have claimed trafficking/slavery is insignificant in Australia’s sex industry.<sup>8</sup> Scarlet Alliance, Australia’s peak sex industry organisation, stated: “Large scale organised crime and ‘pimping’ is not a characteristic of the sex industry in Australia”<sup>9</sup> and “it is our assertion, along with various other sources of evidence, that trafficking is not a widespread phenomenon in the Australian sex industry.”<sup>10</sup>

These claims appear to be based on a lack of successful prosecutions. Prosecutions are hampered by lack of police resources, unwillingness and fear of victims to testify.<sup>11</sup> Crime rings bring women from China, Thailand and South Korea under false pretences, placing them in debt bondage, in slavery-like work conditions in the sex industry.<sup>12</sup> Traffickers often operate with impunity.<sup>13</sup> There is overwhelming evidence that sex trafficking/slavery is alive and well in Australia, despite the sex industry’s denial.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Report of the interdepartmental committee on human trafficking and slavery 22 March 2022. <https://webarchive.nla.gov.au/awa/20220327120732/https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/criminal-justice/files/report-of-the-interdepartmental-committee-on-human-trafficking-and-slavery-2017-2020.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Australian Government (2022). Australia’s international engagement strategy on human trafficking and modern slavery: Delivering in partnership. *Australian Government*. <https://www.dfat.gov.au/sites/default/files/dfat-international-strategy-human-trafficking-modern-slavery-2022.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> US Department of State (2022). 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report: Australia. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/australia/>

<sup>7</sup> McKenzie, Nick and Ballinger, Amelia (6 Nov 2022). “A state of disrepair”: Home affairs minister slams immigration system. *The Age*. <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/a-state-of-disrepair-home-affairs-minister-slams-immigration-system-20221104-p5bvjn.html?collection=p5bu3z>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.acon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/NSW-Sex-Industry-Report-CSRH-2012.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Scarlet Alliance (21 Feb 2017). Inquiry into Human Trafficking: Submission no. 17. <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/57222/0017%20Scarlet%20Alliance%20Australian%20Sex%20Workers%20Association.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement (Jul 2017). An inquiry into human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices. <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2017-07/apo-nid99476.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-trafficking-in-persons-report/australia/>

<sup>12</sup> Simonis, Aneeka and Hurley, David (3 March 2020). How illegal brothels use debt, visas to control women. *Herald Sun*. McKenzie, Nick, Ballinger, Amelia, and Tozer, Joel (30 October 2022). Trafficked: Women shunted ‘like cattle’ around Australia for sex work. *The Age*. <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/trafficked-women-shunted-like-cattle-around-australia-for-sex-work-20221018-p5bqnd.html>; McKenzie, Nick (30 Oct 2022). “I begged him for my life. I cried begging for him to open the door.” *The Age*. <https://www.theage.com.au/national/i-begged-him-for-my-life-i-cried-begging-him-to-open-the-door-20221025-p5bsmc.html>

<sup>13</sup> McKenzie, Nick, Ballinger, Amelia, and Tozer, Joel (30 October 2022). Trafficked: Women shunted ‘like cattle’ around Australia for sex work. *The Age*. <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/trafficked-women-shunted-like-cattle-around-australia-for-sex-work-20221018-p5bqnd.html>

<sup>14</sup> For example: “The Scarlet Alliance stated that the almost sole focus on the sex services industry is ‘unwarranted’ and ‘misguided’ and welcomed the recent shift at a policy level to focus on other forms of trafficking. However, Scarlet Alliance attested that there is still a misperception of widespread trafficking in the sex industry. It contended that this is inferred from inflated global statistics that are not relevant in the Australian context. The Scarlet Alliance argued that Australia is vastly different to other nations, in part due to sex worker organisations, strong peer education and the recognition of sex work within aspects of certain policies.” *New South Wales Community Relations Commission inquiry on trafficking of women in the sex industry*.

Australian states vary in approach to the sex industry; decriminalised with a licensing system, or mostly deregulated, or legalised (while making pimping and brothels illegal). Wherever sex work is decriminalised and unregulated, brothels proliferate - both legal and illegal - and many more women are engaged in the industry (including massage parlours which often operate as sex industry fronts, and through escorting).

## Specific technology being used

Anonymity allows traffickers to interact with potential victims and customers via anonymous accounts and end-to-end encryption (E2EE). Technology is used to identify, groom, recruit, control, and sell women. Dating websites and apps are used to geolocate and thoroughly research victims.<sup>15</sup>

Tech platforms provide space for advertising, including deceptive advertising, grooming (including the use of pornography to ‘train’ and desensitise), and recruiting via websites, social media and chat rooms.

The sex industry has used online tech to diversify: social media, brothel/escort websites, OnlyFans,<sup>16</sup> sugar dating, and Pornhub all profit from trafficked women. These platforms may have terms of service, or community guidelines prohibiting trafficking and non-consensual material. However, it appears that they rarely enforce their own terms of service.

- Sales of victims are conducted online via websites, increasingly via webcam. Facebook has long struggled with human slavery conducted on its platforms.<sup>17</sup>
- Threats of image based abuse are used to control victims; traffickers can easily obtain intimate images and footage.
- Technology-enabled abuse includes use of administrative passwords to control finances or devices, smart watches and phones that allow people to be tracked, and more.<sup>18</sup>
- Snapchat, OnlyFans and TikTok desensitise and groom teens into sex trafficking.
- GPS is used to track and monitor victims.

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<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2421/Final%20report.pdf>. Chelsea Geddes, former sex worker in New Zealand, writes: “I learned that I met the criteria in international law under the Palermo Protocol of being a victim of sex trafficking. That’s the UN convention that was designed to clamp down on trafficking. Of the hundreds of women I met during my years in prostitution, most, if not all of them, met the criteria too.”

<https://nordicmodelnow.org/2022/10/25/the-reality-of-new-zealands-decriminalised-sex-trade/>

<sup>15</sup>[https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/WG\\_TiP\\_2021/CTOC\\_COP\\_WG\\_4\\_2021\\_2/ctoc\\_cop\\_wg\\_4\\_2021\\_2\\_E.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/WG_TiP_2021/CTOC_COP_WG_4_2021_2/ctoc_cop_wg_4_2021_2_E.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> The Avery Center (Dec 2021). OnlyFans: A case study of exploitation in the digital age.

[https://theaverycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/OnlyFans-A-Case-Study-of-Exploitation-in-the-Digital-Age-1.pdf?mc\\_cid=7e71df3722&mc\\_eid=96714ff349](https://theaverycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/OnlyFans-A-Case-Study-of-Exploitation-in-the-Digital-Age-1.pdf?mc_cid=7e71df3722&mc_eid=96714ff349)

<sup>17</sup> Duffy, Clare (25 Oct 2021). Facebook has known it has a human trafficking problem for years. It still hasn’t fully fixed it. *CNN Business*.

<https://edition.cnn.com/2021/10/25/tech/facebook-instagram-app-store-ban-human-trafficking/index.html>

<sup>18</sup> Khan, Coco (4 April 2023). ‘Smart’ tech is being weaponised by domestic abusers, and women are experiencing the worst of it. *The Guardian*.

[https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/apr/04/smart-tech-domestic-abusers-women?CMP=share\\_btn\\_tw](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/apr/04/smart-tech-domestic-abusers-women?CMP=share_btn_tw)

- Bitcoin is used to make hidden or anonymous transactions, and to launder money obtained by trafficking.

## Profiles of victims

Sex trafficking/slavery is overwhelmingly experienced by women. Feminist writer Sheila Jeffreys notes: “there is no comparable provision in which poor and vulnerable men are trafficked and warehoused for the sexual use of women.”<sup>19</sup>

The use of Asian women is critical to the supply and financial success of Australia’s sex industry.<sup>20</sup> As noted, they mainly come from China, Thailand, and South Korea. Advertising women by their ethnicity is permitted in the sex industry in Victoria, in violation of Section 9 (1) of the Racial Discrimination Act (1975).

Poverty is a push factor; the promise of earnings in Australia is a pull factor. Women may be poor, isolated, have few prospects in their home country, or lured with false promises. Migration status of trafficked women typically involves deceptive practices including migration agents working on behalf of traffickers to provide student and humanitarian visas.<sup>21</sup> Australian colleges have been implicated.<sup>22</sup>

## Profiles of exploiters

The majority of illegal brothels in Australia are massage shops. In Melbourne, where prostitution is decriminalised, there are over 500 illegal brothels trading as ‘massage parlours,’ advertising in Thai/Chinese on websites and forums for women who will do massage and “extra” (hand jobs), particularly targeting Chinese students.<sup>23</sup> Arrest rates are low due to understaffing (Victoria Police Sex Industry Coordination Unit).<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Jeffreys, S. (2022). *Penile Imperialism: The Male Sex Right and Women’s Subordination*. Spinifex Press, South Melbourne, p82.

<sup>20</sup> Street, Tatum and Norma, Caroline (29 Nov 2016). Sex tourists in their own country: Digital media advertising of Asian women by the Australian sex industry. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 20(3). [https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0971852416667885?casa\\_token=cnl9oIxoPKsAAAAA:WSFt82qdoMbS08wXTjiPsGe2gtnn8LJiCveFxeYbSg-WrJ26qLJU9RQ2Q2JRoSHyvPSeD1eYX49rlw](https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0971852416667885?casa_token=cnl9oIxoPKsAAAAA:WSFt82qdoMbS08wXTjiPsGe2gtnn8LJiCveFxeYbSg-WrJ26qLJU9RQ2Q2JRoSHyvPSeD1eYX49rlw)

<sup>21</sup> Simonis, Aneeka and Hurley, David (3 March 2020). How illegal brothels use debt, visas to control women. *Herald Sun*.

<sup>22</sup> McKenzie, Nick (3 Nov 2022). Australian colleges identified in allegedly helping women enter country to work in sex industry. *The Age*. <https://www.theage.com.au/national/australian-colleges-identified-in-allegedly-helping-women-enter-country-to-work-in-sex-industry-20221027-p5btih.html?collection=p5bu3z>

<sup>23</sup> Delibasic, Suzan (2 Aug 2019). International students lured by massage parlour owners. *Herald Sun*.

<sup>24</sup> Sodsai, Parisuth (6 Oct 2017). 'The majority of illegal brothels are massage shops' say police. SBS Thai. <https://www.sbs.com.au/language/thai/en/article/the-majority-of-illegal-brothels-are-massage-shops-say-police/x11zv7ov9>

Larger organised operations are set up and run by SE Asian crime gangs and crime bosses - China, Korea, Thailand - as well as Brazil.<sup>25</sup> Brothels are often connected with Australian casinos, involving money laundering schemes.<sup>26</sup>

## Manifestations of exploitation

Sex trafficking manifests in commercial sexual exploitation in legal brothels as well as illegal brothels and massage parlours. Many women are in debt bondage. Women are sometimes kept in slavery, under tight control, unable to leave the premises. Passports are seized by traffickers. Women are kept in illegal brothels, massage parlours, apartment buildings, and private homes.<sup>27</sup>

## Positive measures taken to prevent modern technology from being used to facilitate contemporary forms of slavery

Re Child Sexual Exploitation through Live Distant Child Abuse,<sup>28</sup> the Australian Federal Government demonstrated commitment to prevent and detect using modern technology.<sup>29</sup> However we do not see the same commitment when it comes to commercial sexual exploitation of women. To the contrary, State governments have facilitated increased sex-buyer demand by legalising, decriminalising or deregulating the sex industry. This results in increased demand for young Asian women.

The AFP is responsible for investigating reports of trafficking or slavery. However, it is under-resourced for the task of dealing with organised and transnational crime. The AFP estimates that for every victim and survivor detected by authorities, four go undetected.<sup>30</sup> Federal police rely on the community to report - this is difficult, as sexually exploited women are hidden in private establishments and most men using women for commercial sexual

<sup>25</sup> McKenzie, Nick (6 Nov 2022). 'Full power': How Brazilian criminals set up an Australian sex-trafficking business. *The Age*.

<https://www.theage.com.au/national/full-power-how-brazilian-criminals-set-up-an-australian-sex-trafficking-business-20221025-p5bsl2.html?collection=p5bu3z>

<sup>26</sup> McKenzie, Nick and Galloway, Anthony (8 June 2022). Police probe into Chinese money laundering syndicate headquartered in Australia. *The Age*; Collective Shout (15 Jun 2020). Submission to Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Inquiry. [https://www.collectiveshout.org/submission\\_to\\_anti\\_money\\_laundering](https://www.collectiveshout.org/submission_to_anti_money_laundering)

<https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/police-probe-into-chinese-money-laundering-syndicate-headquartered-in-australia-20220608-p5as2t.html>; McKenzie, Nick, Toscano, Nick, and Tobin, Grace (28 July 2019). Crown's unsavoury business links: how Australia's casino got tied up with criminals. *The Age*.

<https://www.theage.com.au/business/companies/crown-s-unsavoury-business-links-how-australia-s-casino-got-tied-up-with-criminals-20190724-p52aq0.html>

<sup>27</sup> Aneeka Simonis and David Hurley (3 March 2020). How illegal brothels use debt, visas to control women. *Herald Sun*.

<sup>28</sup> Tankard Reist, Melinda (5 Jul 2017). Why are Australian Telcos and ISPs enabling a child sexual abuse pandemic? *ABC Religion and Ethics*.

<https://www.abc.net.au/religion/why-are-australian-telcos-and-isps-enabling-a-child-sexual-abuse/10095644>

<sup>29</sup> Collective Shout (20 Aug 2021). Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement: Law Enforcement Capabilities in Relation to Child Exploitation.

[https://www.collectiveshout.org/submission\\_law\\_enforcement\\_child\\_exploitation](https://www.collectiveshout.org/submission_law_enforcement_child_exploitation); Collective Shout (Oct 2022).

Submission on Draft Consolidated Industry Codes of Practice for the Online Industry.

[https://www.collectiveshout.org/submission\\_draft\\_codes\\_class1a\\_1b](https://www.collectiveshout.org/submission_draft_codes_class1a_1b); Collective Shout (3 Oct 2019). Inquiry into

Modern Slavery Act 2018 and Associated Matters.

[https://www.collectiveshout.org/submission\\_to\\_the\\_national\\_action\\_plan\\_to\\_combat\\_modern\\_slavery\\_2020\\_24](https://www.collectiveshout.org/submission_to_the_national_action_plan_to_combat_modern_slavery_2020_24)

<sup>30</sup> Australian Federal Police (22 Dec 2021). AFP warns of potential human trafficking spike as borders reopen.

*Media Release*.

<https://www.afp.gov.au/news-media/media-releases/afp-warns-potential-human-trafficking-spike-borders-reopen>



exploitation ignore signs of trafficking. For example, OnlyFans sex buyers recognised “that women in the sex trade have little to no other options for income”... yet this does not stop them from purchasing those women.<sup>31</sup>

## Positive measures taken by technology companies to prevent their technologies and platforms from being used to facilitate contemporary forms of slavery

As part of the Online Safety Act 2021, Australia’s eSafety commissioner has power to require tech platforms to use proactive detection technology to intercept images or film of child sexual exploitation.

Similar technology is able to detect violent sexual activity, although sex industry peak body Scarlet Alliance opposes its use, because it might detect violent but ‘mainstream’ activities like BDSM and kink.<sup>32</sup>

Nor does Scarlet Alliance support the use of proactive detection technology to identify first-generation child sexual abuse material, claiming that it might mis-identify adults who look childlike. The industry body resists any type of content flagging and opposes regulation.<sup>33</sup>

## Remaining challenges

The Australian Government addresses “exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation” rather than the inherently exploitative nature of the sex industry itself.<sup>34</sup> This approach legitimises the purchase of sex and allows demand for young Asian women to proliferate.

Experts in the field have warned this would happen, noting persistent criminal links with prostitution, for example in submissions and evidence to the NSW Community Relations Commission inquiry on trafficking of women in the sex industry (2017).<sup>35</sup>

The idea of reframing trafficked women as autonomous “migrant sex workers” promoted in the Australian sex industry prevents recognition of sex trafficking victims.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>31</sup> The Avery Center (Dec 2021). OnlyFans: A case study of exploitation in the digital age. [https://theaverycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/OnlyFans-A-Case-Study-of-Exploitation-in-the-Digital-Age-1.pdf?mc\\_cid=7e71df3722&mc\\_eid=96714ff349](https://theaverycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/OnlyFans-A-Case-Study-of-Exploitation-in-the-Digital-Age-1.pdf?mc_cid=7e71df3722&mc_eid=96714ff349) For more on punter profiles see Caitlin Roper, “The Men Who Buy Women for Sex’ in Norma, Caroline and Tankard Reist, Melinda (eds) (2016). Prostitution Narratives: Stories of Survival in the Sex Trade. Spinifex Press.

<sup>32</sup> Comment #22 Scarlet Alliance. Submissions log and industry associations’ responses to public consultation feedback. [https://onlinesafety.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/221118\\_Submissions-log-responses\\_FINAL.pdf](https://onlinesafety.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/221118_Submissions-log-responses_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> Comment #212 Scarlet Alliance. Submissions log and industry associations’ responses to public consultation feedback. [https://onlinesafety.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/221118\\_Submissions-log-responses\\_FINAL.pdf](https://onlinesafety.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/221118_Submissions-log-responses_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Home Affairs (2014). National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery 2015-2019. Australian Government. <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/criminal-justice/files/trafficking-national-action-plan-combat-human-trafficking-slavery-2015-19.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> Select Committee on Human Trafficking in New South Wales (Oct 2017). Human Trafficking in New South Wales. <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2421/Final%20report.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> Norma, Caroline. Evidence given to Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement (18 Jul 2017). An inquiry into human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices: report: Parliament of Australia, Analysis and Policy Observation. <https://apo.org.au/node/99476>

The AFP should be better resourced to deal with sex trafficking.

Decriminalisation/deregulation of the sex industry removes the ability of police to effectively monitor for exploitation and trafficking.

Businesses with a turnover of less than \$100 million AUD are exempt from annual reporting on slavery in supply/operation chains which means most trafficking related businesses go undetected.

## Practical recommendations

1. The Australian Government move away from conflating sex trafficking/slavery with other forms of trafficking/slavery. This has accompanied the Government's acceptance of the sex industry's argument that sex work is like any other job.<sup>37</sup> In this modern view, it is only non-payment, rather than the violence and degradation, that harms sex-trafficked women.<sup>38</sup> However, as Project Respect states: "Women in the sex industry and women who have been trafficked are ignored in government initiatives to combat violence against women and family violence. The particular experiences of this cohort of women needs to be recognised and addressed. The government recognises and condemns violence against women but largely ignores the violence faced by women in the sex industry and women who have been trafficked."<sup>39</sup>
2. The AFP be better resourced to identify, investigate, and prosecute traffickers and pimps with the best technology available.
3. Organisations *independent of the sex industry* be funded to provide digital outreach, education and support to vulnerable women in the sex industry. Scarlet Alliance has received funding from the Federal Government to conduct its Migration Project and provide domestic outreach to migrant sex workers.<sup>40</sup> Yet sex work organisations typically do not believe that sex trafficking is a significant problem in Australia.<sup>41</sup>
4. Social media and technology platforms should be required to use algorithms and human moderators to detect, report, and remove any grooming, recruiting,

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<sup>37</sup> For example, Jules Kim, Scarlet Alliance CEO, says "of course there is exploitation in the sex industry, of course there is trafficking; we have never suggested otherwise" but argues that it's primarily an issue of migrant sex workers not receiving their full wages. P55, *New South Wales Community Relations Commission inquiry on trafficking of women in the sex industry*.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/inquiries/2421/Final%20report.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> Norma, Caroline (2018). "Globalization and Prostitution." *Global Encyclopedia of Public Administration, Public Policy, and Governance*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018. Pp. 2572–2582.

<sup>39</sup> Project Respect (2017). Position Statement: Illegal Brothels.

[https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/projectrespect/pages/15/attachments/original/1504666071/01062017\\_Position\\_Statement\\_Illegal\\_Brothels\\_-\\_FINAL.pdf?1504666071](https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/projectrespect/pages/15/attachments/original/1504666071/01062017_Position_Statement_Illegal_Brothels_-_FINAL.pdf?1504666071)

<sup>40</sup> Home Affairs (2014). National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and Slavery 2015-2019. Australian Government.

<https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/criminal-justice/files/trafficking-national-action-plan-combat-human-trafficking-slavery-2015-19.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.acon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/NSW-Sex-Industry-Report-CSRH-2012.pdf>; Scarlet Alliance (21 Feb 2017). Inquiry into Human Trafficking: Submission no. 17.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/57222/0017%20Scarlet%20Alliance%20Australian%20Sex%20Workers%20Association.pdf>; Parliamentary Joint Committee on Law Enforcement (Jul 2017). An inquiry into human trafficking, slavery and slavery-like practices.

<https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2017-07/apo-nid99476.pdf>

advertising, or other red flags for sexual exploitation and trafficking. Research by The Avery Center analysed accounts for indicators of third-party trafficking, finding that 36% of accounts are likely third-party controlled. They found that 28% of respondents said it was “very obvious when a trafficker was managing a victim’s account on OnlyFans.”<sup>42</sup>

5. Governments should require all companies selling sexual services to report annually, in a modern slavery statement, on how they are addressing the risks of modern slavery in their operations and supply chains, whether or not the business has a turnover of \$100 million.<sup>43</sup>

## Evidence of modern technology being used to prevent contemporary forms of slavery

Social media platforms have the capacity to use algorithms to be alert to grooming behaviour and trafficking red flags; they should use these capacities as much as possible. Social media is a powerful intelligence-gathering tool. For example, effective indicators of third-party control of OnlyFans accounts, according to The Avery Center, include:

- high-volume content;
- professional content on OnlyFans while documenting other unrelated activities on social media;
- language and hashtags associated with trafficking on their social media pages;
- photos/tags of traffickers on their social media pages;
- Trafficker actively promotes their OnlyFans profile on their own social media page.<sup>44</sup>

## Existing limitations and challenges in using such technologies

### Recommendations:

- Separate sex trafficking/slavery from other types of trafficking/slavery. They are not the same. Survivors need a unique approach to exit and recover.

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<sup>42</sup> The Avery Center (Dec 2021). OnlyFans: A case study of exploitation in the digital age. [https://theaverycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/OnlyFans-A-Case-Study-of-Exploitation-in-the-Digital-Age-1.pdf?mc\\_cid=7e71df3722&mc\\_eid=96714ff349](https://theaverycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/OnlyFans-A-Case-Study-of-Exploitation-in-the-Digital-Age-1.pdf?mc_cid=7e71df3722&mc_eid=96714ff349)

<sup>43</sup> We have previously lobbied for this in anti-slavery legislation. Collective Shout (31 Jan 2020). *Submission to the National Action Plan to Combat Modern Slavery 2020-2024*; Collective Shout (3 Aug 2018). *Modern Slavery Bill 2018: Comment on Provisions*.

<sup>44</sup> The Avery Center (Dec 2021). OnlyFans: A case study of exploitation in the digital age. [https://theaverycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/OnlyFans-A-Case-Study-of-Exploitation-in-the-Digital-Age-1.pdf?mc\\_cid=7e71df3722&mc\\_eid=96714ff349](https://theaverycenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/OnlyFans-A-Case-Study-of-Exploitation-in-the-Digital-Age-1.pdf?mc_cid=7e71df3722&mc_eid=96714ff349)



- Develop an understanding that the legal sex industry escalates demand for women and trafficking arises to meet that demand. The industry is inherently exploitative.
  - The sex industry fosters attitudes that perpetuate slavery, including ethnic preferences and rape fantasy.<sup>45</sup>
  - Many sex buyers are aware that women are trafficked, but they proceed regardless and take no action to assist.<sup>46</sup>
  - The sex industry generally opposes technological strategies like proactive detection or limits on sex industry use of digital spaces.
  - The legal, adult sex industry fosters a tendency to prefer underage girls.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> For example some women trafficked into Chinese-run brothels were being bought to perform rape as well as unprotected sex; the women were not given a choice. McKenzie, Nick, Ballinger, Amelia, and Tozer, Joel (30 October 2022). Trafficked: Women shunted 'like cattle' around Australia for sex work. *The Age*. <https://www.theage.com.au/politics/federal/trafficked-women-shunted-like-cattle-around-australia-for-sex-work-20221018-p5bgnd.html>

<sup>46</sup> For example: Durschlag, R. and Goswami, S. (May 2008). Deconstructing the demand for prostitution: preliminary insights from interviews with Chicago men who purchase sex. Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation. <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/sites/default/files/Deconstructing-the-Demand-for-Prostitution%20-%20CAASE.pdf>; Farley, M., Bindel, J. and Golding, J. M. (Dec 2009). Men who buy sex: who they buy and what they know. Prostitution Research and Education. <https://humantraffickingsearch.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Men-who-buy-sex.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> "A punter who calls a brothel never asks, "Which is your most experienced employee?" but rather, "Who is the youngest girl?" or "Do you have any new girls?" Levy, Dana (12 Mar 2020). Prostitution is not a job and never will be. Here's why. Nordic Model Now. <https://nordicmodelnow.org/2020/03/12/prostitution-is-not-a-job-and-never-will-be-heres-why/>