

The Committee Clerk,
Room 242,
Parliament Buildings,
Ballymiscaw, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3XX.

01.11.2013

Re: The Human Trafficking and Exploitation (Further Provisions and Support for Victims) Bill - Committee Stage.

Dear Sir or Madam,

I do not support human trafficking, coercion and exploitation in any form.

I object to clause 6 of the Human Trafficking and Exploitation Bill.

It is claimed that targeting the clients of sex workers will fight trafficking. I do not agree as transparency will be eroded. Criminalising demand and imposing prohibition creates a black market which serves as a financial incentive for traffickers and is therefore a flawed and dangerous logic. Sex workers and their clients are best placed to identify potential victims of trafficking. Criminalisation will make clients and sex workers less likely to report a potential trafficking victim or to refer them to agencies who can offer them support.

I would like the democratic process to take account of the opinions and experiences of the root and branch people involved. Specifically police officers – not just the high-ranking officers – involved in countering human trafficking, should be canvassed for their opinions as to how to tackle this crime. Just as sex workers must also be canvassed for their opinions as to how human trafficking can be tackled.

Additionally, the Policing and Crime Act 2009 contains powers well beyond those contained in clause 6 of the proposed Bill, introducing a strict liability offence.

It would seem that when taking the Policing and Crime Act 2009 and the Sexual Offences Act 2003 together the police have more than adequate powers to detect and bring to justice any trafficker, exploiter or coercer. It is obvious that the police, given adequate resources, is well able to carry out this task using the existing laws.

Victims are not created by the client or the sex worker. Victims are created by the exploiter, the coercer, the trafficker, the pimp and those living off immoral earnings, and each of those acts are already illegal. The victim is also created by the failure of the existing laws to be properly enforced.

Banning the exchange of sexual services for money is an issue of liberty *not* of exploitation, coercion, trafficking, pimping and living off immoral earnings.

If clause 6 comes into force the police will be faced not only with detecting human traffickers without the co-operation of sex workers or their clients, but will be forced commit scarce resources to arrest and prosecute frustrated husbands, young men out on the town for the night, lonely singles and a plethora of others attempting to find an outlet for their sexual passions.

Yours sincerely, a North Down resident.