

## **AFRO e-Newsletter (August 2009)**

### **1 SEX INDUSTRY BIZ NEWS**

#### 1.1 Massage service and license

Q1. Is it legal to provide massage service in a one-woman-apartment?

Many sex workers provide massage service in one-woman-apartment, which is in fact illegal.

There is no need to apply a massage parlor license if you only provide face, head, neck, shoulder, arm and/or foot (below knee) massage. However, apart from licensed hospitals, maternity homes, clinics, establishments for physiotherapy, and premises for Chinese medicine and chiropractic services operated by registered Chinese medicine practitioners and chiropractors, a license is required for any premises that provides “full-body massage” (meaning a massage service or treatment provided to a person covering that part of his body below the shoulders and above the knees, including or excluding arms) to a customer by a person of the opposite sex. Providing the above-mentioned massage service without a license will offend the Ordinance of “Prohibition on operating etc. massage establishment without a licence” (Section 4(1) and 4(3), Chapter 266 Massage Establishments Ordinance).

Any person who commits the above-mentioned offence shall be liable to-

- (a) on first conviction to a fine of \$50000 and to imprisonment for 6 months;
- (b) on a second or subsequent conviction to a fine of \$100000 and to imprisonment for 2 years.

Q2. Is it legal for a sex worker to provide massage service if she has had a business registration license?

A business registration license is different from a massage parlor license. Even if a person has a business registration license, it is still illegal for her/him to provide “full-body massage” to a customer of the opposite sex without a massage parlor license.

### **2 WORK REPORT**

#### 2.1 Meeting of Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW)

Kendy and Connie had attended a meeting of APNSW in Bangkok on 14 – 17 July. APNSW is a regional network that promotes sex workers' human rights. It was established in 1997 and registered in 2007 as a non-profit company in Malaysia. One of the objectives of this meeting is to review and discuss the membership and election mechanism. Participants agreed that invitation for membership should be sent to those who had taken part in APNSW's activities in the previous 2 years.

The membership criteria is:

#### Individuals

- Men, women and transgenders who work, or who have worked, in the sex industry in Asia or the Pacific in the sex industry.
- Individuals involved in campaigning, research or providing services that promote sex workers human rights and the APNSW mission.
- Sex worker's children

#### Organisations

- National sex workers networks
- Sex workers organisations, co-ops, unions and collectives.
- Non government organisations that provide rights based health and welfare services to sex workers.

AFRO has already applied for formal membership, and expect a closer network with other sex workers' groups in the region.

## 2.2 AFRO's Outing

It was a really hot day!

We were once worried that this outing would have to be cancelled because of rain after a typhoon. But very luckily, Mr. Sun finally came out in time and said hi to all of us!

On 16 August, we went for an outing with a group of nearly 20 people, including sex workers, their children, and AFRO's friends and volunteers. In the morning we first paid a visit to Tai Po Waterfront Park to appreciate flowers and take photos. After

lunch, we went to Hong Kong Heritage Museum. The thematic exhibition “Our Beloved ‘Happy Fruit’ Lydia Sum” attracted most of our attention. Most of us simply couldn’t help laughing along when watching the TV episodes of Ms. Sum.

Probably we all had sweated too much. On the way home we all felt so tired and turned quiet. What made the journey lively again was a sex worker’s singing which even “infected” the driver who eventually sang along with all of us!

### 2.3 AFRO’s Summer Workshop – “Why Sex Work is not Work?”

This summer, AFRO has organized a series of public workshops to enhance understandings on sex workers and the sex industry. There are five sessions covering various areas with special guest speakers such as sex worker, other related party in the industry, medical practitioner, lawyer etc. Participants are mainly from universities and tertiary educational institutions. They are very interested to know more about the industry through real life personal interaction.

### 2.4 Public Education

This summer, AFRO drop-in centre has welcomed visits from Kwun Tong Methodist Social Service Ngau Tau Kok Youth Integrated Service Centre, The Hong Kong Federation of Youth Group Tsuan Wan and Kwai Chung Outreaching Social Work Team, Caritas Jockey Club Integrated Service for Young People – Stanley and 40 students from Associate Degree at Hong Kong Community College, to exchange information and updates on current situation of the sex industry.

## **3 FUTURE WORK**

### 3.1 Annual Walkathon (Nov 2009)

AFRO’s Annual Walkathon has been rescheduled to Nov this year (exact date to be confirmed). We hope that the cool and steady weather in Nov will make the event more enjoyable and popular. We will inform you of the details once they are confirmed. We are looking forward to your enthusiastic support!

### 3.2 The Fund Raising Bazaar (Dec 2009)

Our another regular fund raising event is The Fund Raising Bazaar. As funding support from the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust will be ceased at the end of

Aug 2009, there is an urgent need for AFRO to raise fund for regular programme expenditures.

To ride on the success of previous years, The Fund Raising Bazaar will continue to be held in Dec this year targeting Christmas shoppers. We are now collecting items for the sale. Please kindly contact us if you know any free sources of merchandise supply for the event.

#### 4) AFRO's NEWS READING

##### **Province renews funding for sex worker support van**

<http://www.vancouversun.com/news/Province+renews+funding+worker+support/1887319/story.html>

By REBECCA TEBRAKE, Vancouver Sun August 12, 2009

VANCOUVER — A refurbished ambulance used as an all-night mobile support service for sex workers will be back on the streets of Vancouver starting in September.

The BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, the Ministry of Community and Rural Development and the Vancouver Agreement partners — the city, the province and the federal government — said Wednesday they have come up with enough money to keep the van on the road for the next three years.

"As a former police officer on the beat in the Downtown Eastside, I am well aware of the dangers these women face," Solicitor-General Kash Heed said.

"This is about vulnerable women on the street, and I want to see this program continue because I think they deserve respect and protection."

"Funding provided by the Government of BC and the Vancouver Agreement partners tells women working on the streets of Vancouver that they matter," said Jeanne Legare, Chair of the WISH Board of Directors in a news release.

"It tells them that we must stand up to the violence they face and that we must do everything in our power to stop it and to protect the health and safety of all women in our communities."

The van cruised the streets every night from 10:30 p.m. to 5:30 a.m. handing out coffee, Gatorade, water, condoms, clean needles, and information sheets about bad dates and missing girls. It also linked women up with shelters, emergency services, and health care providers.

It began in 2004 as a partnership between the WISH Drop-In Centre Society, the Prostitution Alternatives Counselling and Education (PACE).

"The van literally saves lives and reduces the environment of violence and high-risk behaviours on the streets at night," said Kate Gibson, Executive Director of the WISH Foundation in a news release.

"The loss of Lisa Arlene Francis, whose body was found in the Fraser River July 23, 2009, has been a tragic reminder of the continuing dangers of the survival sex trade. The return of the MAP van is an important step in providing realistic alternatives to some of the most vulnerable women in our society."

The body of 41-year-old sex trade worker Lisa Arlene Francis was found on July 23. She was reported missing July 17.

Nearly every night since 2004, the van has traveled a route that takes it as far east as Boundary Road, south to Marine Drive and on through the Broadway, Fraser and Kingsway corridors, Vancouver East industrial areas, the Downtown Eastside and Davie Street.

It has been parked since June 13 after its provincial funding ran out.

Keeping the van on the road costs about \$250,000 each year.

Comments:

What a piece of encouraging news!

For sex workers who have to work alone on the streets, this is not only a provision of practical material support and protection, but also a sign of spiritual support and respect! Because they have finally acknowledged **SEX WORK IS WORK**, and pay attention to their work safety. In addition, this will alert the criminals too!

We really hope the HK government can use Vancouver Government's approach for reference, address their safety needs of sex workers seriously, in conjunction with law reform, to decriminalise sex work, so that we could avoid the happening of tragedies!

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