

The term sex worker was coined in 1978 by a sex worker activist. It is the terminology used by the World Health Organisation, the United Nations, and is preferred by the sex work community.

The term sex worker recognises our work as just that – work, and removes any judgement associated with other terms often used by non-sex workers.

In South Australia many forms of sex work are criminalised.

Issues of stigma and discrimination are faced by sex workers on a daily basis. These issues impact upon the self-esteem of individuals and our community.

The myths and assumptions surrounding sex work are numerous. Some of the real facts and figures are as follows:

- Sex workers have lower rates of STIs and BBVs than the general population.  
[www.afao.org.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0020/11198/Mandatory\\_Testing\\_for\\_HIV\\_and\\_STIs\\_among\\_Sex\\_Workers\\_-\\_A\\_Barrier-to\\_Prevention.pdf](http://www.afao.org.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0020/11198/Mandatory_Testing_for_HIV_and_STIs_among_Sex_Workers_-_A_Barrier-to_Prevention.pdf)
- Sex workers have extremely high rates of safer sex practise.  
[csrh.arts.unsw.edu.au/media/CSRHFile/SRB19\\_Sex\\_workers.pdf](http://csrh.arts.unsw.edu.au/media/CSRHFile/SRB19_Sex_workers.pdf)
- Not all sex workers use drugs. The most prevalent drug in the sex industry is tobacco.  
[www.ihra.net/files/2013/11/20/Sex\\_work\\_report\\_%C6%924\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.ihra.net/files/2013/11/20/Sex_work_report_%C6%924_WEB.pdf)

## “What do you do?”

As sex workers, disclosing the work that we do is a very personal and considered choice. Stigma, discrimination, cultural values and societal norms all come into play.

For a sex worker, sometimes it is simply easier not to disclose our profession.

When sex workers come to a clinic we don't want to be treated any differently to non sex workers.

Sex workers do not want to be asked why they do the work that they do, or judged for it. Sex workers want advice from clinicians and have the same rights to access health care, information, tests and treatment, regardless of why or how they have sex.

Sex does not change because money has been exchanged.

When we tell others what work we do, it's common for there to be a shift in attitude, tone of voice or facial expression. These responses may not be deliberate, but they are always noticed

When engaging with a sex worker, be mindful of not only your verbal language, but also of your body language.

As health workers, your response and engagement could be the difference between a sex worker returning to the service, or not.

## Boom or Bust

For sex workers, our body and our health is an integral part of our livelihood.

Sex workers are experts at safer sex – it is an integral part of our work – our bodies are our business.

Sex workers do require the services of a sexual health clinic and will need the facts, so they can make the best decisions for their work.

## When supporting the health of a sex worker, it's important to:

- Be non-judgmental, but give the facts about best treatment and recovery time
- Be aware that a positive result could affect a sex worker physically, emotionally as well as financially.

Sex workers welcome new information and rely on clinics, as well as peer support and other programs, to keep us informed and up to date.

## There's a sex worker for every client

Like any profession, sex workers come in all shapes and sizes and from all walks of life; however, there are some groups that have a larger representation in the sex work community.

Sex workers can be female, male, trans, gender diverse, same-sex attracted, come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, or be a part of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island community.

It's important to remember that anyone could be a sex worker, even if they haven't disclosed their chosen occupation to you.

Sex workers are marginalised, and deal with stigma and discrimination on a daily basis. For sex workers who form part of other marginalised groups, based on such things as sexual identity, ethnicity, health status or lifestyle choices, stigma and discrimination is often intensified. This may increase barriers to accessing services and reluctance to be tested.

**Never make assumptions about someone's identity or situation, because it could alienate them from your service.**

**SIN has developed a comprehensive 2 hour 'sensitivity training' module for service providers. We are always happy to visit you to deliver this training free of charge. Just call us to arrange a time.**

**The Sex Industry Network (SIN) has been operating in Australia since 1984 and has a long history of**

**peer-based work and support for sex workers in South Australia.**

**We are proud of the work that we do and value our community. If you would like more information, or would like to refer anyone to our services, please get in touch:**

## **SIN – Sex Industry Network**

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**We are open:**  
Tuesday – Friday  
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Web - [www.sin.org.au](http://www.sin.org.au)

Facebook - [facebook.com/sexindustrynetwork](https://facebook.com/sexindustrynetwork)

Twitter – [www.twitter.com/sexindustrynetw](https://www.twitter.com/sexindustrynetw)



South Australian Sex Industry Network

## **Sex Workers**

*A resource for nurses, doctors and all clinical staff who work with and for sex workers.*



*Written by SIN*

*South Australia's peer-based sex worker organisation - By sex workers, for sex workers*