

PUBLISHED OCTOBER 2026

SEX WORK LAWS: NORTHERN TERRITORY

Sex work laws are different in each state and territory of Australia.

This guide is an introduction to sex work laws in the Northern Territory.

For more information, contact SWOP NT: 0447 022 332, SWOPNT@ntahc.org.au



Northern Territory Sex Work Laws

In the NT sex work is **decriminalised**.

- Sex work is treated like other work.
- Sex workers are treated like other workers.
- Sex workers and sex work businesses are [subject to the same laws](#) that 'apply to all individuals and businesses generally, including laws governing employment, occupational health and safety, workers compensation and rehabilitation, planning, taxation and discrimination.'
- Sex workers and sex work is protected from discrimination.

Some restrictions still apply:

- Sex workers must be 18 or older.
- Clients must be 18 or older.
- All forms of sex work must comply with the [Planning Act 1999](#).

All sex work is decriminalised in the Northern Territory. If you have any issues with police about doing sex work in any space you are choosing to work from, contact [SWOP NT](#).

Type of sex work	The laws
Private work (incalls and outcalls)	Decriminalised.
Establishment work (brothels etc.)	Decriminalised.
Street-based sex work	Decriminalised.

Private sex work and sex services home-based businesses - incall and outcall

Private sex work (also known as independent sex work) is **decriminalised**. Sex workers can offer both incalls and outcalls.

- 1 or 2 sex workers may work from residential premises, if they both live there (see [NT Planning Scheme](#) part 5.4.10.2).
- New sex services home-based businesses cannot be adjacent to an existing kindergarten, school, childcare centre, place of worship, or in a restricted development zone.
- Private sex workers can employ one other person as support staff.
- Location restrictions do not apply to sex workers working from hotels, motels or short term accommodation.



Brothels, escort agencies, and erotic massage premises

Sex work businesses are **decriminalised** in the Northern Territory .

Sex work businesses are able to operate in Industrial, Central Business and Commercial zones. They are regulated by the [NT Planning Scheme](#) (see [5.5.14 Sex Services-Commercial Premises](#)) and [NT Worksafe](#) (see [Sex Workers and Sex Work Businesses Work Health and Safety Guidelines](#)).

- New businesses cannot be adjacent to an existing kindergarten, school, childcare centre, place of worship, or in a restricted development zone.
- Businesses that were operating before 2019 are compliant with the NT Planning Scheme regardless of location. This is also known as 'grandfathering'.
- Operators (owners and/or managers) of workplaces with three or more sex workers must have a ['suitability certificate'](#).

The practice of fining workers (e.g. for lateness or a single missed shift) is **illegal** in the NT. If this happens to you, contact [SWOP NT](#) for advice and action.

Street-based and outdoor work

Street-based and outdoor sex work is **decriminalised**. Laws about public order apply. As with all other sex work, is prohibited to work adjacent to an existing kindergarten, school, childcare centre, place of workshop, or in a restricted development zone.

Under a decriminalised framework, all NT laws and regulations that apply to public spaces also apply to street-based and outdoor work.

Workplace health and safety

[NT Worksafe](#) regulates sex work businesses in the Northern Territory.

- [Operators](#) of sex work workplaces, and all sex workers, must 'take all reasonable steps to adopt and promote safe sex practices.'
- Sex work businesses must provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to sex workers free of charge.

READ: WORK HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDELINES FOR SEX WORKERS AND SEX WORK BUSINESSES IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY



Anti-Discrimination

- Sex work, and sex workers, are fully protected from all forms of discrimination and vilification in the Northern Territory.
- All organisations and employers in the Northern Territory have a 'positive duty' to take reasonable steps to ensure discrimination does not occur.
- It's illegal to discriminate against anyone because of sex work - including current workers, past workers, associates, sex workers' friends and family, and people assumed to be sex workers.
- All sex workers are protected from discrimination - including full service workers, sexual massage providers, online sex workers, street based sex workers, strippers and porn performers.
- This protection is unique and special to Northern Territory. It is world-leading and best practice.

If you have been discriminated against, you can contact SWOP NT and they can help you lodge a complaint with the Northern Territory Anti-Discrimination Commission.

Fraud, non-payment for services and 'stealthing'

It is **illegal** for a person to make "a false representation or otherwise [act] fraudulently" if their actions result in a person doing, or continuing to do sex work.

This law likely captures:

- A boss tricking a worker into doing sex work
- A client not paying for services, but leading a sex worker to believe that they did;
- A client sneakily removing or not using a condom without a sex worker's knowledge or consent (often called 'stealthing'). 'Stealthing' is a form of sexual assault.

Advertising

- It is **illegal** for a businesses to advertise job vacancies for sex workers
- It is **illegal** to publish advertising that does not comply with the Sex Industry Regulations 2020. These regulations currently only apply to newspaper advertising.

Sex work advertising is also subject to:

- Federal advertising and internet laws
- Terms and conditions set by private advertising providers (e.g. newspapers or advertising websites).



Other Laws

PLEASE NOTE: the value of penalty units are updated annually. The dollar amounts listed in this document are accurate until 30 June 2027. [Click here](#) to view the most up-to-date penalty unit value.

Offence	Maximum Penalty
Intimidating assaulting or threatening someone into doing sex work	5 years imprisonment
Forcing someone to do sex work by damaging or threatening to damage their property	
Intimidating assaulting, threatening or coercing someone to hand over their earnings made from sex work	
Supplying, or offer to supply a dangerous drug in exchange for sex work services. 'Dangerous drug,' means any drug listed in Schedules 1 or 2 of the Misuse of Drugs Act 1990 (NT) .	
Asking or allowing a person under the age of 18 to perform sex work	Up to 14 years imprisonment
Asking or allowing a person under the age of 18 to work in a sex work workplace	
Receiving payment from a person under the age of 18 doing sex work	
Receiving sexual services from a person under the age of 18	
Saying or implying to a potential client that a sex worker has had a sexual health test to 'induce' them into receiving services	Fine of 20 penalty units (\$3,880)

