

3 May 2007

To the Scarlet List, NSW List, IUSW List, Eros Foundation, Dr Paul Wilson, Dr Barbara Sullivan,

*\*\*This email is intended to inform sex worker communities about services in Queensland. Please feel free to share this email with concerned sex workers.\*\**

Self Health For Queensland Workers In The Sex Industry (SQWISI <http://www.sqwisi.org.au/sqwisi/aims/Aims.htm>) voluntarily wound down the organisation last week. The SQWISI Board has appointed an Administrative Committee to oversee the cleaning out of all 4 offices. The website simply states "All direct services have now ceased. For further assistance please contact your nearest Sexual Health Clinic." <http://www.sqwisi.org.au/>

As many sex workers are already aware, the entire staff of SQWISI was sacked by the SQWISI Board late last year. This followed an 18 month internal industrial dispute that involved both staff-staff conflicts and staff-board conflicts. The details of these conflicts are confidential and not known to Scarlet Alliance. During the 18 month dispute the Board ran an internal investigation, the results of which were never released to the SQWISI staff and also never seen by Scarlet Alliance. The internal investigation allegedly recommended an organisational review, which was commissioned last October and ended with the sacking of all the staff. The results and recommendations of the commissioned review were never released to the SQWISI staff or Scarlet Alliance. 2 regional offices, Townsville and Cairns, were kept open after the review, however they have closed now as well.

The 5th National Strategy on HIV/AIDS ([http://www.scarletalliance.org.au/library/5th\\_nat\\_stat\\_hiv aids/view](http://www.scarletalliance.org.au/library/5th_nat_stat_hiv aids/view)), the National STI Strategy ([http://www.scarletalliance.org.au/library/natstat\\_sti05/view](http://www.scarletalliance.org.au/library/natstat_sti05/view)), and the correlating Queensland Strategies (<http://www.health.qld.gov.au/sexhealth/documents/28206.pdf>), all refer to the importance of ongoing peer education in Queensland, the involvement of affected communities in leading, running and evaluating services, and the centrality of strong community organisations in the response to HIV and STI's. Queensland Health have confirmed their commitment to these principles in recent correspondence to Scarlet Alliance. A review of services for Queensland sex workers will be conducted in coming months, followed by a tender process for sex worker services later in the year.

SQWISI was one of the first incorporated sex worker organisations in Australia and a founding member of Scarlet Alliance, playing an important role in the establishment of the Australian sex worker rights movement. Unfortunately, recent years saw SQWISI move away from a peer education and participation model, leading to less sex worker input and control over the organisation and eventually resulting in SQWISI withdrawing their membership to Scarlet Alliance. The SQWISI experience serves as a potent reminder to all of us that sex worker leadership and participation is imperative to the success, sustainability and accountability of our sex worker organisations to the sex worker community.

It is in no ones best interest that a sex worker organisation has closed in this way.

Scarlet Alliance is disappointed that SQWISI has been closed and Queensland sex workers are left without representation, services, or any formal avenue to effect policy and legislative change. Sex worker involvement in the future directions of services in Queensland is the only way to ensure that the next funded service doesn't fall into the same situation. If you are a Queensland sex worker and you would like to be involved in formal responses to the SQWISI closure, please let Scarlet Alliance know at [info@scarletalliance.org.au](mailto:info@scarletalliance.org.au).

It is timely to remember in situations such as this that sex worker involvement is central to the success, sustainability and longevity of sex worker services and organisations.

As relevant information comes to light we will let you all know,

Elena Jeffreys

on behalf of the Scarlet Alliance Executive

**Scarlet Alliance, the Australian Sex Workers Association**

<http://www.scarletalliance.org.au>

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