



# Annual Report 2014 - 2015

# Key Project Activities

## Communications Project

The communications project is responsible for having the messiest desk in the office, the messiest hair to match, and for coordinating/producing:

- This Annual Report you are holding right now;
- The annual Scarlet Alliance National Forum;
- Scarlet Letters (a triannual three-page publication covering Scarlet Alliance updates and activities and other important issues affecting sex workers, which is inserted into publications produced by Scarlet Alliance Member Organisations, and distributed across Australia);
- The E-Newsletter (distributed to all Scarlet Alliance members via email, several times a year);
- The SASS-E list (a sex work supporters' news updates email list);
- Producing other resources and coordinating other events as required.

resources and information, and to engage with Scarlet Alliance, the national sex workers' peak body. The Forum was jam-packed with workshops, forums, discussions, the Scarlet Alliance AGM, and a Red Umbrella Rally. Highlights included an anti-racism workshop, a young people and sex work discussion, the fantastic food (provided by the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre), and the insanely uncomfortable chairs (!). The Forum culminated in a sex worker only party, with performances, DJs and the presentation of the Whore Of The Year Award.

In February 2015 the Communications Project saw a change of staff, resulting in a revival of proVision, an annual national magazine written and created entirely by sex workers. proVision is now in its eighth year, having had a two year hiatus. This year's theme is "Seeing Red—What Makes Hookers Angry", and includes articles, stories, poems and artwork covering such topics as racism, the silencing of sex workers

in academia, the stigmatisation of parenting and sex work, and the invisibility of male sex workers. The publication was overseen by an editorial committee of sex workers from across the country, and has been distributed widely throughout Australia. It has been a delight to be able to be a part of such a creative, political, and empowering project, and to be able to provide a platform for sex workers from a wide variety

of backgrounds, communities, and experiences to speak, and to be heard.



Last year the project coordinated the 2014 National Forum, held in Melbourne at Trades Hall. This was the largest National Forum to date, with 114 people attending. It provided an invaluable opportunity for independent sex workers as well as sex worker organisations to network, share

## International Projects

### International Program ends after nine years.....

Scarlet Alliance works in capacity development partnerships with sex worker organisations, advocates and leaders. We facilitate sharing between sex workers and organisations, including sharing Scarlet Alliance's advocacy and organisational governance expertise, and we facilitate sex workers' participation in regional consultations and forums.

In 2006, the Australian Government funded Scarlet Alliance to capacity build with sex workers in Papua New Guinea, and in 2008 in Fiji, Timor Leste and the Asia and Pacific region to strengthen sex worker leadership, advocacy and organisational development. Our model of capacity building provided organisation to organisation training, mentoring and support, with a shared understanding of the barriers sex workers face in organising and delivering advocacy.

The sex worker organisations SAN Fiji, Scarlet Timor Collective and Friends Frangipani emerged as a result. Sex worker advocacy, visibility and representation have grown, delivering strong, cohesive messages. Hundreds of sex workers have joined their national organisations, contributing to consultations, governance, and community events such as World AIDS Day. There have been unique wins, such as the first ever anti-discrimination case and compensation won by four sex workers in Lae, Papua New Guinea.

Sadly, the Government's decisions and cuts to Australian aid have brought the International Program to an end. In wrapping up we have prepared strategies for sex worker advocacy to continue, including through the newly-formed Pacific Sex Worker Network.

The end of the funding has created a "cliff" type of gap that is unlikely to be filled by other donors or mechanisms, and dismantles the staffing and systems built over the previous years. Sex worker organisations require a longer term commitment

from funders to build and strengthen capacity at both an organisational and individual level. This is because of things like non-linear development: two steps forward, one step back; and the fact that sex worker leaders and communities are impacted by HIV, laws and violence.

As the International Program Manager, I would like to thank every staff member, past and present, for their energy and enthusiasm in delivering activities for sex workers. Together, we have built strong partnerships and friendships between sex workers across the Asia and Pacific region, and together we have created a movement with solidarity that will endure!

### Scarlet Timor Collective, Timor Leste

Scarlet Timor Collective (\$TK) has grown from a loose network of sex workers into a functioning advocacy organisation with newly obtained NGO status. Community networking and consultation activities with local sex workers are well established with more than 400 registered members. These activities and links to the community are integral for



*Scarlet Timor Collective join the May Day rally and public holiday in Dili, Timor Leste*

advocacy as well as service delivery. Informal peer-based support services are provided to sex workers through a drop-in service.

\$TK is well regarded within the NGO sector and



*Jade Barker (Scarlet Alliance Tasmanian Project Manager) and Maria McMahon (International Project Manager) at the Hot and Heavy Policy Launch*

within the Timor Leste government, with broad and strong support for \$TK to continue as the key community voice for sex workers. These forums affirmed the value of \$TK advocacy and the ongoing need for community grounded expertise about sex worker issues in multiple contexts, including HIV and sexual health, ending violence against women, and human and industrial rights.

However, gaining a new source of funding that can provide \$TK with a secretariat base and a capacity to undertake advocacy and community networking is important to ensure momentum is not lost. In addition, \$TK has just become an official registered NGO and will need continuing capacity building support to flourish as a community-based sex worker NGO. Low levels of education and English literacy among the sex worker community will make thriving in the NGO sector in Timor Leste challenging for \$TK without further support.

As a result of the Key Stakeholders meeting in May 2015, consultations are underway to access direct funding, mentoring and in-kind support to

\$TK to continue as a community based sex worker organisation after this project wraps up.

### **Friends Frangipani, Papua New Guinea**

Friends Frangipani, the national sex workers' organisation of Papua New Guinea, represents the rights and interests of sex workers, including addressing the vulnerability of sex workers to HIV. Scarlet Alliance has worked with Friends Frangipani in a capacity development partnership since 2005, delivering training and providing extensive mentoring and support whilst Friends Frangipani staff and representatives prepare for and engage in advocacy and peer-based community development.

Friends Frangipani assessed that they were ready to stand alone, following ten years of training, mentoring and support from Scarlet Alliance, and the partnership officially ceased at the end of 2014. We remain in touch through regional activities, and Friends Frangipani is continuing to provide strong advocacy particularly for law reform and the decriminalisation of sex work.

Scarlet Alliance provided training, mentoring and support for Friends Frangipani staff and Executive Board members to consult and deliver advocacy, run three offices, provide outreach in eight places and govern an organisation with over 700 members.

As a result, the HIV sector in PNG are more aware of issues for sex workers, and politicians and local leaders such as the Governor of Port Moresby have called for changes to laws and policing to reduce stigma and discrimination. A meeting in May 2015 set up the mechanisms for decriminalisation-style policing practices to be rolled out across major provinces, while national law reform is progressing more slowly.

### **Regional**

Scarlet Alliance mentors and supports sex worker organisations from the region to identify key issues, share and develop advocacy strategies, build collaborations, and supports and facilitates the delivery of sex worker advocacy within regional forums. This also contributes to the work of the regional network.

\$TC has increased their membership almost 100% in one year, reaching out to more sex workers for

activities, information and exchanging of ideas, and engaging greater numbers in projects such as their advocacy mural addressing stigma and discrimination.

The AIDS 2014 project brought together 17 sex worker representatives from the region, joining a group of over 100 sex workers from 30 countries

building south-south collaborations for advocacy and policy development. Key messages were developed for country-level law reform and policy advice to key stakeholders in the HIV response. Seven advocates stayed on after the meeting in an exchange visit with Empower, looking at good quality service provision in under resourced settings to better meet the needs of sex workers.



*Attendees at the first Pacific Leaders Summit, in Sydney in 2015*

during the AIDS 2014 Sex Worker Pre-Conference, allowing for exchange, mentoring and collaboration on advocacy.

Sex worker advocates led and chaired sessions and organised activities including skill shares, workshops and presentations, and contributed to developing and delivering the sex worker Consensus Statement into sessions, workshops and public advocacy events. This included the Candlelight Vigil and workshops which enabled exchanges across cultures and language barriers. The Sex Worker Networking Zone and sex worker advocacy was vibrant and delivered clear advocacy messages.

A workshop and exchange visit with Empower, Thailand as part of a series called Sex Worker ASEAN, enabled deeper exchanges between sex worker advocates from the region, and built stronger understandings of effective strategies for advocacy, partnership building and service provision to better meet the needs of sex workers, as countries move into a regional economic model that may impact sex workers. Sex worker organisations from ASEAN States plus Timor Leste, Fiji, Australia and PNG are

A meeting of Pacific sex worker leaders from six countries was held in May 2015 and identified issues and gaps in Pacific representation, proposed to develop a Network of Pacific sex workers, and will contribute to the Oceanic Symposium for IBBS later in 2015.

## Migration Project



Some members of the Migration Project Steering Committee

The Migration Project received the welcome news of another three years of funding in mid 2014. This has meant the project's work in providing advocacy, representation and support to migrant and CALD sex workers and sex worker peer educators has been able to continue in earnest. The Migration Project, run, staffed and led entirely by migrant sex workers, for migrant sex workers, has continued to grow, as it has since it was first formally funded in 2009.

This year has seen the Migration Project representing on the local, regional and global stage. The project has worked on representation to government and community organisations and agencies involved in the anti-trafficking sector, to increase understandings of the nature of the sex industry and migration. Throughout the life of the project the ongoing need for multilingual peer support for migrant sex workers has been evident; however successful word of mouth has meant that direct contact by migrant sex workers has consistently increased. The project has continued to provide direct support to migrant sex workers for specific issues, predominantly regarding visas and legal issues, culturally appropriate referrals, and linkages to sex worker organisations for ongoing support. As always we continue to support the important work of peer educators in delivering services to migrant sex workers.

The ongoing need to react and respond to inaccurate and often racist and offensive anti-sex work media on trafficking remains an issue for the project. We have seen a positive shift at a policy level by the Australian Government, away from an almost sole focus on the sex industry and towards a broader response to trafficking. This has been a welcome shift that is in line with Scarlet Alliance's advocacy, the recommendations by the UN Special Rapporteur on Trafficking following her visit to Australia, and with the evidence-base drawn from the outcomes of the trafficking response in Australia. However although the purview of Australia's anti-trafficking response has broadened to encompass other industries, the on-the-ground responses and the media both remain firmly focused on the sex industry and continue to conflate consensual sex work by migrant sex workers with sex trafficking. The project has had to continually engage with media on this inaccurate and sometimes dangerous reporting. Unfortunately we have both witnessed firsthand and received reports from migrant sex workers on the direct impact of increased stigma and discrimination following from such media reporting.

The steering committee continues to be a successful, highly engaged mechanism of interaction, guidance and support. As always, we have held regular steering committee meetings. The steering committee directly

develops materials to share with our membership and peer educators at the National Forum- an invaluable opportunity to interact, communicate and network face to face with sex workers and peer educators from around Australia. Through the steering committee we produced a PowerPoint presentation on how to work more effectively with migrant sex workers, a session on how sex worker organisations could provide improved services and be more welcoming and inclusive of migrant sex workers, a 'commonly asked questions about migrant sex workers and trafficking' fact sheet for sex worker peer educators, and graphic messages written in language by the steering committee to display at the National Forum. The steering committee felt the messages that were displayed at the National Forum venue would help to make migrant sex workers who may be attending their first National Forum feel more welcome, and to support a more culturally diverse and inclusive space. Two steering committee members were supported to attend the National Forum to assist project staff in presenting the powerpoint and session to our members at the National Forum.

The project has continued to provide support to peer educators through the production of resources, interpreting support, peer translation checking, access to current information, and appropriate referrals. The availability of translated resources in PDF has assisted in our engagement with migrant sex workers and our ability to provide accurate information. The project also provided direct in person support through training for new CALD peer educators, and joint outreach in South Australia, QLD and ACT.

Regular consultation within our steering committee, our sex worker communities, our membership, and with organisations both locally and internationally, gives us a strong evidence base for our work. The project continues to engage in media, with enquiries by stakeholders and organisations, and through participation in consultations on anti-trafficking issues and the impact of anti trafficking on sex worker communities. Representation has occurred in this period to NGOs and within the health sector, through awareness raising to visiting delegates, politicians and dignitaries, with students, communities and at national and international conferences, and through various interviews with academics, university students, TV, radio, newspapers, magazines and online media.

Notably the project had substantial input into the CEDAW shadow report, which is a non-government perspective on Australia's implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), focusing on Article 6 which relates to the trafficking and exploitation of women. The project's recommendations were taken up in a number of parts of Key Issue 7: Improving the legal response and support services available to trafficked women, and resulted in the addition of Key Issue 8: Adopting a human rights based approach to sex work.

The project organised and presented a panel on migration and mobility with sex worker advocates and project staff from Empower Thailand, as well as participation by sex workers from Japan, Cambodia, Singapore and New Zealand. The panel discussed the situation for migrant sex workers in each country and included observations on the impact of anti trafficking responses on migration and mobility for sex workers.

The Sex Worker Pre-Conference for AIDS 2014 also focused on migration and mobility, as part of five key themes nominated by sex worker attendees. Workshops and discussions culminated in a consensus statement written by over 100 sex workers, from 30 different countries, who attended the pre-conference. This consensus statement was delivered to the main conference and used in continued advocacy after the conference.

The steady increase in direct from migrant sex workers in each reporting period, on a variety of recurrent issues relating to laws and migration, points to the strong evidence of a need for such information to be made accessible for migrant sex workers, and support for workplace and migration issues outside of the criminal justice framework.

Our partnership with Empower continues to strengthen and grow, especially with the invaluable opportunity to collaborate face to face at AIDS 2014. Empower has continued to provide legal, migration and workplace information and support to sex workers in Thailand who are thinking of travelling abroad, via their successful workshops, on outreach, through the booklet produced by the project, and through their Bad Girls Radio show. The project has continued to serve as an important conduit for reliable information, and referrals for sex workers considering travelling for work to Australia.

## Policy Project

This year we said farewell to Zahra Stardust, who has been the Policy Officer at Scarlet Alliance for the past four years. The work Zahra has done in establishing and growing this position has been outstanding, and her contribution to Scarlet Alliance as an organisation continues as she fills the International Spokesperson role.

Scarlet Alliance has also presented at “Sex and the State: Criminalisation of Sexual Behaviour Worldwide”, and the International Bar Association Conference Tokyo International Forum. At Scarlet Alliance events, including the National Forum in Melbourne and the Hot and Heavy key policy launch in Sydney, we have presented on topics such as



Gemma, Scarlet Alliance's current Policy officer, presenting at the Hot and Heavy Policy Launch

In light of this it has been a challenging and busy year for the Policy Project. Scarlet Alliance has submitted on a number of issues including to: the Therapeutic Goods Association on home HIV testing; the Australian Human Rights Commission, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Intersex Rights Snapshot Report; the Standing Committee on Health, Inquiry and Report into Hepatitis C; the Australian Human Rights Commissioner Tim Wilson for the Rights and Responsibilities Consultation; and to SA Health, on the South Australian Targeted STI and BBV Prevention Program for Sex Workers. Scarlet Alliance also provided feedback on the Sex Work Regulations 2006 to Consumer Affairs Victoria, in light of the expiration and remaking of these regulations. Scarlet Alliance contributed to the NSW Strategic Review, reporting on the impact of the NSW in Australia in regards to the development of their new strategic plan for 2016-2020.

biomedical intervention, the AIDS 2014 report, and the Principles for Model Sex Work Legislation. We have also submitted articles for publishing in HIV Australia and Rights Now on issues including decriminalisation, biomedical HIV prevention, and human rights at work.

We continued to lobby politicians, also meeting with Greens' member David Shoebridge. Scarlet Alliance continued to be represented as part of the AFAO National Policy Officers Network, and the LGBTI Health Alliance Policy Network.

# Scarlet Alliance National Training and Assessment Program

## (SANTAP)

This year has been one of transition for SANTAP, with a new coordinator starting in the role officially in February. Since then we have had a face to face meeting of the Assessors Network in Sydney to recap on where we are at, share tips and tricks from previous assessments, strategise on the future direction for the network and to acknowledge a job well done on the first round of successful assessments completed by the new Assessor's Network.

So far this year we have had four successful diploma graduates for SANTAP! Four experienced peer educators from around Australia have had their hard work, skills and expertise confirmed and validated with the awarding of the nationally recognised Scarlet Alliance Diploma of Community Development. The workplace assessment and prior recognition process was conducted by the skilled peer educators of the Assessors Network, who themselves hold the Diploma of Community development and have been trained in conducting assessments. Workplace assessments by sex worker peer educators, for sex worker peer educators, was identified as the only way the multifaceted nature of peer education could be captured. The peer educator role is complex and highly skilled, combining an understanding of knowledge and skills, the work context, attitudes, values, and ethics, as well as what the person actually does to perform the role. This model has been a great success, with the knowledge, skills and history of our community being retained and shared at the same time as providing the opportunity to gain a nationally recognised tertiary qualification.

The Scarlet Alliance Peer Educator Online Training, the interactive online training course for new peer educators or for peer educators who want to brush up on their knowledge, has also had a range of new enrolments this year. Thanks to the assistance of our wonderful sex worker alpha testers, the online training has been checked and updated and is looking great, with written articles and learning materials that contain links to video and audio footage, presentations, relevant websites and further readings, as well as optional activities for submission. Excitingly the online training is currently

being translated into our three key community languages--Simplified Chinese, Korean and Thai--and we hope to have these online by the end of the year.

Megan, one of this year's SANTAP graduates



Currently we are taking enrolments for either the Scarlet Alliance Diploma of Community Development or the Peer Educator Training Online. Whether you are an experienced peer educator or a sex worker who has been thinking about getting into peer education, SANTAP has the course for you! Contact the SANTAP coordinator at: [santap@scarletalliance.org.au](mailto:santap@scarletalliance.org.au) or visit <http://www.scarletalliance.org.au/SANTAP/> to find out more.

As we know, sex worker peer education has been central to the successful HIV and STI response in Australia, and the value and effectiveness of peer education for sex workers is widely recognised as best practice, including by the UN and the Australian Government. SANTAP continues with our aim to increase the workforce development of, and number of, trained and qualified sex worker peer educators in Australia, as well as to recognise and validate the complex skills, expertise and knowledge involved in sex worker peer education.

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and sex workers everywhere...