Transitioning programs for sex workers: An exploration of promising practice

Technical & background paper

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1 Acknowledgments

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2 Introduction

One of the main challenges in evaluating transitioning programs is establishing best practice in program design and service delivery, which can assist in both evaluating programs and the development and delivery of effective programs and services. This is partly because of the problematic nature of some research into transitioning programs. Most of the research has either been carried out in criminalised contexts, takes an abolitionist approach to sex work, and/or is not conducted by/for sex workers. The research on 'exiting' has largely developed from Månsson and Hedin's Swedish study of 'women leaving a life in the sex trade' carried out between 1981-1995 (1999, p. 67). From this research work, Månsson and Hedin developed the first 'exiting' model for understanding women's experiences of leaving sex work. The model was developed through a framework that understood women's engagement in the sex industry as exploitative and violent and, as Sanders (2007) suggests, it viewed 'exiting' as being dependent upon an individual woman's emotional strength, which is a questionable foundation for the development of transitioning and 'exiting' programs. However, in this paper we have approached transitioning using a sex work-as-work and labour rights framework and this has led us to define transitioning more broadly as career development, with the idea encompassing transitioning into, out of or within the industry, or starting sex work; movement, mobility and career development in sex work; and leaving sex work.

In addition to this, other factors complicating research into transitioning programs are the social and legal contexts of sex work, diversity within the industry, stigma and discrimination and social and structural inequalities. The existing research and 'exiting' programs are also affected by conceptual and operational definitions surrounding 'exiting' and sex work, which has added to the issues surrounding the development of a best practice framework to measure and evaluate different facets of program design and service delivery as well as underlying program logic. In short, this has led to the absence of standards for the measurement and evaluation of transitioning programs for sex workers in Australia through a framework of best practice. This paper attempts to address this gap.

Currently, there is little data on transitioning programs in Australia and while the few evaluations that are available provide a snapshot, they do not necessarily provide a detailed picture on the need for transitioning programs (indeed, this seems to be taken as given) or promising practice in service delivery. This report considers how transitioning programs might be better evaluated; the essential elements needed to ensure best practice; and monitoring and evaluation processes.

2.1 Background and purpose

This Technical and Background Paper is a supplementary document to a larger evidence review undertaken as part of a research project exploring transitioning programs in Australia. The results of the evidence review are reported elsewhere (see Sandy, Meenagh, & Nes-Iadicola, 2019). The aim of this Technical and Background Paper is to inform the development of a best and/or promising practice framework for transitioning programs and evaluation tool. The promising practice framework developed as a part of this research can be used to inform program design, development and implementation. The evaluation tool can be a useful resource in program evaluation and has been designed to act as providing a baseline, as well as a benchmark, from which to evaluate transitioning programs.

The paper is based on a desktop review of the scholarly and grey literature on transitioning and the best practice in providing services to sex workers. In addition, in-depth interviews were carried out with organisations providing services to sex workers across Australia and New Zealand. The paper presents an overview of key findings from the research, including a conceptual and theoretical

framework for best and/or promising practices in transitioning programs and presents a tool for monitoring and evaluation.

2.2 Methodology

The development of an evaluation framework and tool is framed around:

- the development and refinement of a conceptual framework, indicator themes and indicators;
- the development and refinement of best practice standards; and
- the development of data collection tool(s)/evaluation tool(s).

These tasks are the focus of this paper, which describes the findings from the literature review on best practice and consultation with stakeholders. The following section outlines the methods undertaken to complete this research.

2.2.1 Literature review

A literature review was conducted to identify current programs, evaluation methods and best practice in program design and service delivery. Scholarly publications on exiting or transitioning from the sex industry and grey literature including program reports, evidence reviews, and evaluations of sex industry specific exiting or transitioning programs were reviewed. A detailed description of the literature review process and protocol is available in the evidence review report (see Sandy, Meenagh and Nes-Iadicola (2019)).

2.2.2 Stakeholder consultations

In recognising that much of the existing program development and other activities undertaken in Australia is not published or publicly available, Sandy and Meenagh conducted 21 consultative, in-depth interviews with key stakeholders (totalling 28 individual interviewees). These consultations took place between 21 December 2017 and 12 March 2018 and included peer and non-peer organisations that provided transitioning services or programs across Australia as well as New Zealand.[1] The purpose of the consultations was to gain an updated understanding of transitioning programs, types of services, methods of delivery and identification of best practice.

The interviews were semi-structured, and questions related to participants' experiences of service delivery, understandings of transitioning and 'exiting' and identification of best practice. While most participants were interviewed over the phone, or via Skype, some interviews were conducted face-to-face where geographical logistics permitted. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim with the permission of participants. All transcripts were returned to research participants to ensure accuracy in transcription. All participants were given the option of being named in the research or allocated with a pseudonym in order to protect their identities. Following on from Daley (2013), we recognise the importance of allowing the individuals who represented marginalised communities in this research to be represented in a way that respects their right to be heard as members of sex worker organisations and communities. Participants who indicated a preference to be identified by their known name are identified as such in this report. Research participants and organisations have been named with informed, written consent, as per RMIT University Ethics Approval. Pseudonyms have been used for all participants who did not wish to be identified.

For participants wishing to remain anonymous, transcripts were de-identified and any specific details that may allow a person to guess the identity of individual participants were removed. Pseudonyms have been used for these participants to further protect confidentiality. Where a pseudonym is used in the paper, only an alias is used, and the details of the organisation are not reported in order to maintain confidentiality. Although these steps have been taken to protect confidentiality, there is a

[1] Based on the findings from stakeholder consultations, 'peer' is defined as a person with a lived experience of sex work. Peer is defined as 'people who identify as sex workers and carry the stigma associated with that' (Interview with Ava). A peer organisation or peer-based organisation is where members of an affected community develop and implement harm reduction strategies for and with their peers, while a non-peer organisation provides services to members of an affected community and is staffed by a blend of peers and non-peers.

chance that people familiar with those working in the sex work sector might be able to guess the identity of individual participants. Participants were informed of this possibility as part of the informed consent process. Interview data were analysed thematically to identify recurring themes and develop a conceptual framework and best practice checklist/tool. The project received ethics approval from the College of Design and Social Context Human Ethics Advisory Network, which is a subcommittee of the RMIT University Human Research Ethics Committee.

A consultative approach was taken for this part of the research as, in Australia, most of the activities in the sector are not published or publicly available. Twenty-one consultative interviews were conducted with key stakeholders (totalling 28 individual interviewees). Participating programs and/or organisations that agreed to be identified included:[2]

- Arrest Referral Program, Resourcing Health and Education in the Sex Industry (RhED), Melbourne, Victoria
- Career Development Program, Respect Inc, Brisbane and Townsville, Queensland
- Health Education and Support workers, RhED, Melbourne, Victoria
- Hydra e.V, Germany[3]
- New Zealand Prostitutes Collective (NZPC), Auckland, New Zealand
- Pathways Program, RhED, Melbourne, Victoria
- Project Respect, Breaking Barriers: Enhancing Employment Pathways program, Melbourne, Victoria
- Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association, Sydney, New South Wales
- Sex Workers Outreach Project ACT (SWOP ACT), Canberra, Australian Capital Territory
- Sex Workers Outreach Project New South Wales (SWOP NSW), Sydney, New South Wales
- Vixen Collective, Melbourne, Victoria

The consultations involved in-depth interviews with sex worker and non-sex worker organisations and individuals and groups that have involvement in transitioning and allied programs across Australia and New Zealand.

The consultations were essential in building knowledge of the features of promising practice in transitioning programs for sex workers, and also provided the opportunity to include the voices and perspectives of sex workers and peer organisations with professional or advocacy experience in the development, delivery and/or scholarship of transitioning or other programs for sex workers. The findings from these stakeholder consultations are discussed throughout the paper and were integral in identifying the key elements of programs and strategies, best and/or promising practice, the features of success and points of challenge, as well as suggestions for how to better support peer and non-peer organisations providing transitioning programs or services.

It is important to note that these consultations, while reflective of a variety of peer and non-peer transitioning programs and strategies, are not representative of all transitioning programs and settings in which transitioning services are offered in Australia (and internationally) as this was beyond the scope of the research.

[2] These programs and organisations have been named with informed, written consent, as per RMIT University Ethics Approval. Programs and organisations that did not wish to be identified are not included in this list.
[3] Although Hyrda e.V is a German-based organisation, we interviewed a former worker on their transitioning program who has a long history of involvement with sex workers in Australia.

2.2.3 Notes on terminology

There are a number of key terms used throughout this paper that are contested so it is useful to briefly define and discuss these here. It is important to begin this discussion with defining what is meant by the term of sex work and explore some of the controversy surrounding the term 'exiting' as well as outlining what transitioning means.

2.2.3.1 Sex work

Sex workers include female, male, trans and gender diverse adults and young people who receive money or goods in exchange for sexual services (UNAIDS, 2012). Sex work refers to the provision of sexual services for payment (cash or in-kind), with the practice involving more formal commercial exchanges also known as 'direct' services (e.g. street, brothel, massage and escort work), and 'non-direct' services (e.g. erotic dancing, strip shows, web camming and phone sex) (Sanders, O'Neill, & Pitcher, 2009). As a result, sex work varies as to whether it is more or less formal, or organised, and between and within countries and communities (UNAIDS, 2012).

The settings in which sex work takes place includes brothels or massage parlours and relaxation centres (or similar dedicated establishments), gentlemen's clubs, strip clubs, hotels, private homes, bars, restaurants, parks and the streets, and because of this sex work may be recognisable or hidden. It is important to recognise the many different and varied forms of sex work in Victoria, and across Australia, because this often determines what buying and selling sex means. Research on sex work has revealed a diversity of values and interpretations attached to sex work and significant cross-cultural differences in the social meanings of the consumption of sex (Sanders, O'Neill, & Pitcher, 2009; O'Connell Davidson, 2003; Sandy, 2014). This means that sex work does not mean the same thing in different social and cultural contexts and any definition of sex work needs to recognise the social and geographical diversity of sex work, as well as changes in patterns of sex work and sex work settings (Sandy, 2018; UNAIDS, 2012). In addition to this, sex workers are more than just their job, they are a diverse group of people whose life experiences are many and varied. As Ouspenski states:

> For us to begin to talk about transitioning out of sex work, we must begin [by] talking about the social and structural factors that perpetuate the inequality both within as well as outside of sex work. We must also address social-structural factors such as poverty, substance use, sexual abuse, [and the] legacy of colonization, to name a few, that enable individuals to subsist within sex work under exploitative conditions and limited choices. (Ouspenski, 2014, p. 18)

In the early 2000s, the term sex work began displacing 'prostitution' as part of a discursive shift from the moral to the economic, a shift also evident in Victoria's legislation with the *Prostitution Control Act (1994)* being renamed the *Sex Work Act (1994)* in 2010. While this term may be easier to understand in some Western contexts, research has highlighted how it does not translate well in other contexts (Kotiswaran, 2008; Pigg, 2012). The term may have helped in facilitating a much-needed discursive shift; however, it is not necessarily value-neutral, and in certain contexts the exchange of sex for money is not viewed as work or a profession (Wardlow, 2006), and can be more a means of survival (Wojcicki, 2002). Originally coined by a feminist sex worker in the late 1970s (Leigh, 1997), the internationalisation of the sex work-as-work discourse has played an important role in organising sex workers, building solidarity, and improving working conditions but caution is needed to ensure that alternative meanings attached to the exchange of sex for money in different cultural contexts and social settings are not excluded (Sandy, 2014; Wardlow, 2006).

2.2.3.2 'Exiting'

In transitioning studies, Bowen (2015) has noted that much of the literature presents sex work as a dangerous profession or harmful activity that people are trapped in, escaping or have survived. Some of this framing is connected to a conservative sexual morality in which sex workers are viewed as deviants and criminals combined with a protectionist approach that casts them as victims (Doezema, 2010; Sandy, 2014; Weitzer, 2007). The modern-day framing of sex work as dangerous and harmful is also connected to debates over the meaning of sex work, which are highly polarised. While these debates are quite complicated, to try and simplify, abolitionists view sex work as sexual exploitation and argue that sex work should be abolished (see for example Jeffreys, 1997). This understanding

is premised on the assumption that sex should not be sold and the idea that no woman could freely choose or genuinely consent to sex work (Barry, 1984). In this analysis, sex workers are viewed as deceived victims of male power and privilege, and in this way sex work is constructed as, and seen to be, coercive and by nature forced (Doezema, 2010; Kempadoo, 2005; Sandy, 2012, Weitzer, 2007). As O'Connell Davidson (2006) argues, women's participation in sex work is said to be a result of drug addiction, physical and sexual abuse, male control and dominance and the oppressive social order (see for example, Norma and Tankard-Reist, 2016). The recent reconstruction of sex work as synonymous with sexual slavery promotes the view of sex work as inherently violent to women and an institution of male dominance (Day, 2007; O'Connell Davidson, 2006; O'Neill, 2001, see for example, Barry, 1995). As a result of the reduction of sex work to masculine violence and sexual slavery or biological and moral contagion, identities and analyses are constructed around and based on sexual deviancy and pollution or passivity, sexual victimhood, and sexual exploitation (Law, 2000; Sandy, 2014).

The abolitionist perspective has been challenged on the grounds that it oversimplifies the relationship between human agency and social structure and is unable to consider women's agency in sex work (Day, 2007; Kempadoo, 2005; O'Connell Davidson, 1998, 2006; Sandy, 2014; Sullivan, 2003). It is also a viewpoint often exercised in conservative moral agendas on sex work, gender, and sexuality (Chapkis, 2005). Critics of this perspective argue it is unable to account for the complexity of sex workers' experiences, that the 'victim subject' created within this discourse is overly determined and, based on gender and cultural essentialism, has led to a de-contextualised, ahistorical subject feeding into the notion of women as weak, vulnerable, and helpless as well as ignoring the experiences of men and transgender people who sell sex (Agustín, 2007; Doezema, 2010; Kapur, 2005; Kulick, 1998; O'Connell Davidson, 2006; Sandy, 2014). Furthermore, in 'exiting' research, this abolitionist framing of sex work presents the practice as a harmful activity that sex workers remain trapped in and struggle to remove themselves from (Bowen, 2015; Law, 2011).

On the other hand, sex work perspectives view sex work as a form of labour and reject the idea of sex work as inherently degrading (Agustín, 2007; Day, 2007; Murray, 2001; Law, 2000; Sanders, 2005; Sandy, 2014). Research employing a sex work-as-work framing often attempts to distinguish between voluntary and forced sex work, with the argument made that sex work which is freely chosen by adults can be considered an economic activity like any other. This framing focuses on a person's capacity (and right) to engage in sex work as economic agents and moral actors (Agustín, 2007; Brennan, 2014; Chapkis, 1997; Day, 2007; Kempadoo, 2005; Sandy, 2013; Sullivan, 2003). This understanding grew out of the sex worker rights movement, which emerged in the 1970s from the American civil rights movement and quickly became global – albeit dominated by sex workers and their advocates from the industrialised North until the late 1980s (Alexander, 1998; Kempadoo, 1998; Leigh, 1997; Sandy, 2013). The sex worker rights movement saw the development of a reactive discourse (i.e. developed in reaction to abolitionist and pathologising discourses) in which sex work was argued to be a legitimate occupation for consenting adults. As part of the discursive shift from the moral to the economic, the sex work-as-work discourse gained traction internationally as sex workers started arguing for the legitimacy of their work and challenging one-dimensional views of sex work expressed by abolitionists, public health officials and governments (Pheterson, 1989). In 1986 the International Committee for Prostitutes Rights (ICPR) developed the World Charter of Prostitutes Rights which outlined sex workers' key demands: decriminalisation of sex work; recognition of sex work as a form of labour; right to self-representation and self-determination; end to stigma and abuse; self-determination of working conditions and safer working environments and a guarantee of human and workers' rights for all sex workers (ICPR, 1998).

While the sex work-as-work discourse has forced many to grapple with the idea of free will and choice in sex work, as the discourse developed, it was accompanied by the creation of a dichotomy of free and forced sexual labour. This conceptual dichotomy between free and forced sexual labour was developed by Northern sex workers at a time when the international feminist movement and global governments were attempting to address the issues surrounding sex work and human trafficking (Doezema, 1998, 2002). Northern sex worker activists developed this dichotomy largely in response to the abolitionist perspective which argued that all sex work is forced, and people cannot genuinely consent to sex work. The free/forced dichotomy quickly became one of the dominant models for understanding sex work, and in countries like Australia, New Zealand and the

Netherlands, the sex-work-as-work paradigm (and free/forced dichotomy) was a crucial factor that facilitated shifts in government policy and funding allocation. Debates around the sex work as work paradigm and free/forced dichotomy continue to shape various international instruments and government responses to sex work.

Although Dewey (2008) and Sandy (2014) have noted that 'consent' and 'choice' are loaded words when used in conjunction with sex work, arguments about 'choice' and 'coercion' continue to determine the content of most debates about sex work. This has resulted in the current state of knowledge and theory building being plagued with issues, and this is particularly so in the area of transitioning studies. According to Sandy (2014, p. 115), coercion, force and agency are very hard to gauge and measure in sex workers' everyday lives, with her oral history research documenting how sex workers' experiences varied through time and workers were rarely outside a system of power and inequality (see also Brennan, 2014; Campbell, 2003; Constable, 2006; Dewey, 2008). The debates about consent and choice overly simplify the very complex questions raised by sex workers' lived experiences and, framed in black and white terms, struggle to explain how the socio-economic factors positioning women – and we say women because women overwhelmingly provide the labour – structure and shape women's and other marginalised peoples actions and choices (Sandy, 2014).

Within the area of transitioning studies, Bowen's (2015) research exploring sex workers' own lived experiences of transitioning has challenged narrower understandings of transitioning. By illuminating weaknesses in 'exiting' frameworks and the one-dimensional view of sex work they are based on, Bowen highlights how these frameworks are unable to capture the various histories, oppressions, and experiences of sex working people. In presenting a more complex analysis of transitioning, Bowen's (2015, 2013) work considers how working in the sex industry can be both exploitative and liberating (see also Law, 2011; UK Network of Sex Work Projects (UK NSWP), 2008). This perspective and approach is shared by the UK Network of Sex Work Projects (UK NSWP) in their work on developing good practice guidance on transitioning in which they suggest, the 'term "routes out" is often preferred to "exiting" as it seems to reflect the multi-faceted nature of leaving and the many ways this may be accomplished. It also seems to better reflect the yo-yoing nature of the journey' (UKNSWP, 2008, p.1). UK NSWP go on the argue that the term:

> … "exiting" is often presented as a structured, rigid and coercive approach isolated from harm minimisation services. However, these good practice guidelines redefine it as an option within a range of non-judgemental, holistic, harm reduction services offered to sex workers. Sex workers must first be in touch with flexible, crisis-led, harm reduction services if they are ever to be engaged with a process of more substantial change. (UK NSWP, 2008, p. 3)

As Law (2013, p. 101) notes, the term 'exit' 'positions the sex industry as something that needs to be escaped, and this minimises sex workers' diverse labour arrangements and experiences. Law (2013) and Bowen (2015) argue that when the term 'exit' is used in transitioning research, it is not only offensive to sex workers, but also disrespectful as it simplifies diverse employment experiences in sex work. Participants in this study insisted that 'exiting' is:

> … a very negative word. As soon as sex workers, we hear that word, I think many of us feel immediately defensive. There's a lot of emphasis by people outside of the sex industry that sex workers must want to stop or get out of this horrible job and things like that. We certainly wouldn't see the same kind of resources or encouragement for people in other industries to exit. We're not saying to doctors, oh do you want some help leaving your really stressful job, you poor thing? … We think [sex work is] like any other job, that if you're not happy doing that job, you change jobs. I've been a waitress in the past, I don't want to be a waitress right now because I have options that I'd much prefer to do. But maybe in the future, if I need to make some money, I'll go back to it. It's the same with sex work. People move in and out all the time depending on their life circumstances and what's working for them at different points … we don't believe that people should aspire to leave the industry. We believe that people should aspire to do whatever's right for them. If that is leaving, great, we'll help them. But if that's staying and making sure that they're maximising their health and safety while they're working, then that's right up our alley too. (Interview with Sarah)

Lexxie Jury also expressed dislike with the term 'exiting' and the idea of 'saving' women 'exiting' programs embody for her:

> I don't like it … I have to say, when I first read that you wanted to do an interview about this, it really got my hackles up and I was like actually just calm down, deep breaths. For me it brings – it raises the people that want to save us, that we'll teach you how to sew because that is such a better job than what you're doing. It's that kind of perspective of the second I hear exiting program, that's what I envision in my head is being taught how to sew … it goes back to that judgement, the you can't fend for yourself, so we'll teach you how to, we'll give you some kind of skill so that you can move on from here and we can save you from this life. That's what it dredges up for me … if you were a good girl we would never have gotten into this situation in the first place… If you – if we just help you get better, like I'm sick, we can concentrate on that and we can make it better and we can save you, we can fix it, and you'll be better now that you know how to be a supermarket checkout person, or you can work at McDonald's now because you've got that skill. It's probably a skill that I already have. (Interview with Lexxie Jury, SWOP ACT)

Many participants spoke of how the term 'exiting' and framing of 'exiting' programs was counterintuitive to understanding sex work as work. For P.G. Macioti the term 'exiting' had 'a negative connotation … linked to problems of addiction rather than changing jobs':

> the vast majority of [sex workers] see their activity as work, even if they don't identify as sex workers, would feel this term as stigmatising, and as referring to their work as not work, but as something that is desirable to leave behind, which is part of the problem for people who would like to do other jobs alongside sex work or stop doing sex work. So [other people] not seeing it as work is part of the crucial problem that hinders mobility in the labour market. (Interview with P.G. Macioti, Postdoctoral Fellow (UTS & UWA) and former outreach coordinator Hydra e.V., Berlin)

P.G. highlights how, while she sees the term as inherently stigmatising, it also perpetuates myths and norms surrounding sex work and sex workers – as Jane Green poignantly reflected:

> Even the idea of transitioning, people view it like - I think there's a lot of the ideas of other people outside sex work and particularly people that work in other services have this perception that we've only ever done sex work. Therefore, we need some massive amount of help to do something else, which most sex workers have moved in and out of different types of work as well as sex work, or they have this perception that sex work is not skilled work and we have no skills. Therefore, we need to learn skills or be trained to do anything because we're starting from some sort of ground zero where we have nothing. Neither of those things are true and that's really problematic….. and workers tend to find that's really offensive. (Interview with Jane Green, Vixen Collective)

A key concern for Jane was not only the lack of consultation with sex workers, but also how 'exiting' programs contribute towards stigmatisation and marginalisation:

> I think one thing that's important to remember is it's inherently discriminatory to think that we need exiting services … when you're making an assumption about what sex workers need, I always tell people: take away the word sex worker and put plumber. If it sounds stupid, then you're probably doing something that's inherently discriminatory and stigmatising. (Interview with Jane Green, Vixen Collective)

Michael also discussed how the term 'exit' detracts from efforts to understand sex work as work, which is a point of resistance for sex workers:

> I wouldn't use [the term exiting] … I think it's fundamental that people have to realise that sex work is actual work and that's a difficult concept for a lot of people to grasp. Talking about an exiting program where no other industry has exiting programs, we don't exit judges, lawyers, politicians, plumbers, anybody like that. There are industries that are far more dangerous and far more, I think on a psychological level, probably far more damaging than sex work. Nothing

> comes without a price. There are good days and bad days, but deep-sea fishing, we don't exit people from deep-sea fishing. That's the most dangerous job in the world. So, it takes away from that concept that what we do is work … people don't take that concept. It's recreation for a lot of people. But for some of us it's work and it's important that we get that across. We'll never get rid of stigma and discrimination until it's recognised as real work and not … something you have to be rescued from, exited from. No, it's not how I see sex work and I've been doing for it 40 years. (Interview with Michael)

For Jane, P.G. and Michael 'exiting' programs reinforce stigma and discrimination. Similarly, Ahi Wi-Hongi from the New Zealand Prostitutes' Collective (NZPC) commented how the term is part of the stigmatising language surrounding sex work and sex workers. Ahi linked this language with stigmatising social practices that treat sex workers as a class apart:

> … it's one of those words that makes it seem like sex work is so different to other kinds of work, I've never been asked about exiting factory work or other jobs that I've done ... the feeling that it makes people have when people talk about exiting sex work or exiting the sex trade instead of leaving sex work and getting a different job, people feel as though we're outside of society, we're outside of the workforce, rather than being part of it. So, it's really stigmatising language. (Interview with Ahi Wi-Hongi, NZPC)

During our interview, Catherine Healy outlined the ways in which the term has 'become quite loaded', explaining how its ties with conservative approaches was one of the reasons for her rejection of the concept: 'It's sort of an anti-sex worker approach, the word exiting is not generally – I don't think it's used in any other occupational context and for that reason I find it very clumsy and offensive actually' (Interview with Catherine Healy, NZPC). Jules Kim from Scarlet Alliance expressed her opposition to 'exiting' in terms of how it has drawn attention away from the sex workers' rights movement and the re-direction of crucial resources:

> [exiting is] problematic terminology in terms of sex worker rights and that's because of that history of exit programs taking money away from sex worker organisations; also, it being seen as this framework that sex work is inherently problematic and that people should be exiting, that that is the goal for sex workers. Of course, there are some sex workers that want to stop sex working. I think that it's like any other profession, that there are people that might want a job change. It's about recognising that, but I think it does – that term 'exit program' has become so loaded because of past history, that it becomes quite problematic in that context. (Interview with Jules Kim, Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association)

Participants also discussed how the term 'exiting' did not reflect everyday practices and experiences. For example, Catherine said:

> … just looking at that word and its connotations and its ownership where it sits predominantly, it's too loaded for us and it doesn't fit with what we see in terms of daily experience, well, you know, what people are talking about when they want to leave. They want to leave, they talk about leaving. (Interview with Catherine Healy, NZPC)

Other participants echoed Catherine's concerns. 'Exiting' was a problematic term for Michael because of the finality suggested by the word. As Michael explained, it 'means a one-way door to us', and as a result, the term does not capture or adequately reflect working realities: 'to me it means exit, you're leaving the building sort of thing; there's a fire or something behind you and you know bang you're out and you're not going to come back in through that door, is the sort of way we interpret it' (Interview with Michael).

This understanding of exiting as being final was shared by Amelia, who reiterated Catherine's point about how the term was unable to reflect everyday realities and experiences:

> … exiting would mean retiring or going into another job entirely that's not sex-work related … Transitioning could be more of a gradual out of the industry. Exiting is like yes, we're ending it here and we're moving onto something else, straight away. I'm not very keen on [exiting], I much prefer transitioning because it's broader and less stigmatising. I think a lot of people hear

> the old 'exit the industry' and yeah, I just don't like it. I know a lot of sex workers don't. The whole 'exit' pathway. It's transitioning: that can encompass building of additional skills, et cetera, et cetera rather than just getting out. (Interview with Amelia)

Similar to Amelia, Ava expressed a preference for the term transitioning, which she felt was more reflective of the work her organisation was engaged in. Ava was involved in the development of a sex worker-led career development program, and commented that her organisation would:

> … never use [the term 'exiting'] in our day-to-day work. It's not used in any of our terminology, it's not used in our resources, none of our promotional tools. There is language around – I think the term is transitioning, if people want to look at the option of transitioning in or out or around sex work. So, it's really just saying to people, this is your career and so you can go which way you want to go. (Interview with Ava)

Our consultations with stakeholders across Australia and New Zealand revealed how 'exiting' is more commonly associated with anti-sex work, abolitionist approaches and framings. Some of this discussion has highlighted the controversy surrounding the provision of services and/or development and offering of programs in this area, which as Alison suggested can result in 'exiting' or transitioning programs for sex workers being seen as 'almost heresy' (Interview with Alison). Yet, as Alison noted:

> if you take the perspective that sex work is work and therefore there's no reason to ever leave it, then you're not treating sex work as work, you're treating it as something completely separate and different and special in some way. Actually, it's work like any other and there is absolutely no reason why you wouldn't want to leave it, just as you may want to leave any other job … The fact that it is a bit more difficult and if a sex worker wants to – we support sex workers no matter what they want to do, so making an exception – we're not going to support you if this is your choice – that's why it needs to be there. Because everything else is there, we do everything else, so we have to do this too. (Interview with Alison)

Gabby Skelsey raised a similar point 'some workers, like any job, they want to change it' and adopting a rights-based approach can perhaps offer a way to acknowledge and address this in a less problematic framing (Interview with Gabby Skelsey, RhED). In our discussion of this term we hope to have highlighted how problematic some framings are in this area, especially when discussing the concept of 'exiting' in the context of understanding sex work as *work*.

While there is an understandably high degree of resistance by sex workers with the use of the term 'exiting', as Jill Martin highlighted, most organisations providing services to sex workers are engaged in work in this space:

> Exiting is extremely negative. It indicates that people need to get out of the industry and its often how anti-sex work organisations would refer to a transitioning program. That's not to say that peer-based orgs don't all have some sort of transitioning program, which is at a minimal about workshopping what you're already doing and moving to other sectors of the industry. Generally, all of them will help you with resume writing, getting into that mainstream employment. (Interview with Jill Martin, RhED)

Gabby raised similar points:

> … I don't like the word exit, just because it makes us sound like a saving organisation. Some programs that work with sex workers assume that people who work in the industry are victims of violence. [Our program] is about transitioning or looking at other options, when it's right for the sex worker, in their time. (Interview with Gabby Skelsey, RhED)

Georgie also spoke of how 'exiting' and the sense of finality associated with the word failed to capture sex workers own experiences of transitioning, and the varied options transitioning presented:

> For me personally, it's about someone choosing to look at an alternative work industry. So, they're exiting work. It doesn't mean that they're closing and deadlocking that door … [for some workers] they were burned out, which happens in careers. So, they felt that choosing to work in [sex work] wasn't an active choice [anymore]. It was an ultimatum, because they'd created

> a lifestyle they had to service, as we all do. We've all got mortgages or rent and outgoings. So, sometimes it was about giving them education, giving them information and empowerment of choice so that they felt that if they wanted to continue sex-working, albeit if they put a timeframe on that, but it was an informed choice more, so that they'd regained a bit more power over it. So, for me, exiting was just allowing someone to make a choice rather than feeling trapped in a career that they weren't enjoying or felt that they couldn't exit anymore because of the stigmas associated with it. I've done social work for 10 years, I can go and use that on my résumé. For people in the industry, it's very, very difficult. Whilst there might be an employment stigma, it's also the personal stigma. (Interview with Georgie)

Transitioning research and programs have to recognise the complexity of and difficulties faced with language and terminology along with the varied ideological positions to sex work in order to move beyond these debates and start looking at ways in which transitioning can become sex worker inclusive and work within a sex workers' rights framework. As the participants revealed, most organisations provide some kind of informal services and support in this area, and while this may indicate a need for transitioning services, as participants made clear, this is because of the stigma and discrimination sex workers face outside of the sex industry rather than sex workers lacking any skills or starting from some kind of 'ground zero', as Jane eloquently reflected. P.G. went on to discuss how her organisation had struggled to deal with terminology, eventually settling on the term 'reorientation', but for P.G. this:

> … still has a feel of lifestyle, which I also find problematic because it should really be concentrating on the fact that you are in a profession which is highly stigmatised. Therefore, the more you don't address it as a profession, the more you're going to reinforce the stigma: that is the biggest challenge for people wanting to change jobs or do other jobs … [It] is all based on the fact that [sex work is] not recognised as work. So, if we….. still reproduce that [with our terminology], we are basically failing from the start. (Interview with P.G. Macioti, Postdoctoral Fellow (UTS & UWA) and former outreach coordinator Hydra e.V., Berlin)

There is an urgent need to work with sex workers to develop a definition of transitioning that includes, and is based on, the idea of sexual labour and sex worker agency as encapsulated in the sex work-as-work discourse. Lexxie raised this as an important point for programs that adopt a sex work as work approach:

> If you want – if you don't want this to be seen as a saviour, a saving of sex workers, saving of their souls, saving of their purity; if you don't want it to seem like that, you need to change the terminology, it needs to be called something else. It needs to be called – I don't know, anything is better than an exiting program. Immediately I just come back to I don't want to talk to you. (Interview with Lexxie Jury, SWOP ACT)

As Bowen suggests, the new emphasis on government initiatives and funding for transitioning programs means that 'hearing from sex workers is essential to advancing agendas in this area' (2015, p. 1). This is certainly the case in Victoria with significant funding increases for transitioning programs in the 2017-2018 state budget as well as a new funding allocation made by the Department of Treasury and Finance (see Parliament of Victoria, 2017 and State of Victoria, 2018 for details on funding). If sex work is understood and defined as a form of labour, it needs to be seen as a part of a person's working life. For these reasons, the approach and definition taken in this research uses a sex work as work perspective as this reflects sex workers' own understandings. We use the term 'transitioning' to encourage the view of sex work as *work* and understanding a person's engagement in sex work as part of the trajectory of their working lives (Law, 2013). It also promotes the idea of transitioning as a non-linear process and challenges the view of sex work as something a person has to be 'in' or 'out' of (Bowen, 2013). In this paper, transitioning is defined as: transitioning into, out of or within the industry, or starting sex work; movement, mobility and career development in sex work; and leaving sex work.

2.2.4 Development of the conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for the evaluation tool is based first and foremost on an understanding and appreciation of sex work as work. This is in line with the findings from stakeholder consultations

and international research on best practice in program design and service delivery as well as the Victorian Government's current approach to regulating sex work which, under section 3(1) of the *Sex Work Act (1994)*, defines sex work in terms of labour. As a result, the technical paper has been purposively selective in the exiting literature it has drawn from. This is because some of the studies focus on 'prostituted women' and the emphasis is on cyclical enter-exit-re-enter processes with the framing of 'successful exiting' in terms of 'hitting rock bottom' and 'breaking away from prostitution' (see, for example, Baker, Dalla, & Williamson, 2010; Dalla, 2006; Hammond & McGlone, 2014; Hedin & Månsson, 2004; Månsson & Hedin, 1999). As the accompanying Evidence Review Report identifies, some of the 'exiting' models and frameworks in the literature are quite problematic, however, there are some notable exceptions, for example Sanders' (2007) typologies of transitioning and the work of the UK NWSP (2008) (Sandy, Meenagh, & Nes-Iadicola, 2019).

For most sex workers, leaving the sex industry is not a singular event, but a process with varying levels of complexity (Baker, Dalla, & Williamson, 2010; Dalla, 2006; Hedin & Månsson, 2004; Hickle, 2017; Månsson & Hedin, 1999; Mcnaughton & Sanders, 2007; Oselin, 2010; Sanders, 2007). Much of the existing literature on transitioning from sex work is concerned with the process of how the sex industry is left, and it should be noted that while some of the literature takes the perspective of sex work as work, the fixation upon leaving the sex industry ultimately portrays sex work not as work, but as a social problem for which exiting interventions then become the solution. Within this literature, there is a focus upon street-based sex work; workers with 'chaotic lives'; backgrounds of social disadvantage, trauma, and abuse; and an emphasis upon experiences of trauma and loss (hitting 'rock bottom') as creating a catalyst for exiting (Baker, Dalla, & Williamson, 2010; Dalla, 2006; Hammond & McGlone, 2014; Hedin & Månsson, 2004; Holly & Lousley, 2014; Månsson & Hedin, 1999; Murphy & Venkatesh, 2006; Oselin, 2010; Preble, 2015). Given this framing, a 'stages of change' logic is often deemed appropriate, as it enables service providers to identify where sex workers are at in their transitioning journey, and direct services to them appropriately so that they are helped to move through this process (Baker, Dalla, & Williamson, 2010; UK NSWP, 2008).

In Ouspenski's (2014) report on the features of best practice for sex worker transitioning programs, they outline and summarise theoretical models that have informed program development. These models are discussed in more depth in the evidence review, but to briefly highlight the key models:

- Fuchs Ebaugh (1988) – Role Exit
- Prochaska, DiClemente and Norcross (1992) – Stages of Change
- Månsson and Hedin (1999) – expansion of the Role Exit model
- Williamson and Folaron (2003) – describe the stages between entering and exiting sex work
- Hester and Westmarland (2004) – outline the relationship between structural, relational, and individual factors
- Sanders (2007) – Typology of Transitions
- UK NSWP (2008) – Cycles of Change (expansion of the Stages of Change model)
- Baker, Dalla, and Williamson (2010) – expansion of the Stages of Change model.

Although the framing of sex work within some of these models may be problematic, the 'stages of change' model may hold more relevance for transitioning journeys and processes and program design but not necessarily for program evaluation. However, caution is needed with the use of this model as the focus on stages of change tends to occur as a way of directing services to sex workers to address a 'social problem' that is resolved by leaving the industry, as we argue in the evidence review report (Sandy, Meenagh, & Nes-Iadicola, 2019). Another issue with some of the literature is that it tends to differentiate between street-based and other forms of sex work (e.g. indoor), and in the process situates street work as particularly problematic.

Mayhew and Mossman (2007) and Ouspenski (2014) conducted reviews of the existing literature, and these two reviews have been useful for framing the current trends in best practice for

transitioning programs. At the request of the Ministry of Justice in New Zealand as part of a review of the *Prostitution Reform Act (2003)*, Mayhew and Mossman (2007) conducted a review of the literature to determine models of best practice for exiting programs, with a specific focus on exiting for underaged sex workers. While this report provides a useful overview of existing literature, the report does contain some problematic language and framing. For example, the report conflates trafficking with sex work and uses the language of 'pimps', which is a problematic framing of third-party involvement in sexual commerce and reproduces ideologies of sex workers requiring rescue.[4] In response to the question of why sex workers in the decriminalised context of New Zealand should be encouraged to leave the industry, Mayhew and Mossman draw upon the work of the abolitionist scholar Melissa Farley and state: 'The answer to this is that sex workers operate in a risky world both in terms of sexual health and violence – whatever controls are put in place to reduce risks' (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007, p. 17).

Mayhew and Mossman's response ignores global evidence that decriminalisation reduces risks to sex workers' health and safety. For example, in 2006 UNAIDS recommended decriminalisation to protect sex workers' human rights and health (OHCHR & UNAIDS, 2006). It is also contrary to research carried out in New Zealand almost contemporaneously that documented how the decriminalisation of sex work had reduced violence to sex workers, increased sex workers reporting abuse to the police and improved police attitudes towards sex workers (Ministry of Justice, 2008). More recently, Amnesty International argued that the decriminalisation of all aspects of consensual adult sex work was 'grounded in the principles of harm reduction, gender equality, recognition of the personal agency of sex workers, and general international human rights principles' (2016, p. 2). Moreover, as Das and Horton document where sex work is legal, 'the focus of policing is on reducing violence, protecting sex workers, and supporting effective HIV programming' (2014, p. 3). Laws, policies and policing practices can help, or harm sex workers and risk environments and sex workers' health and safety often intersect with police and laws (Das and Horton, 2014; Sandy, 2012). As Decker and colleagues (2015) document, the UNDP Asia-Pacific (Godwin, 2012), UNAIDS (2012), the UN Special Rapporteur on Health and Human Rights (UN, 2010) and High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR and UNAIDS, 2006) have all recommended the decriminalisation of sex work. Decriminalisation has also been endorsed by the Global Commission on HIV and the Law (2012) and, for many years now, sex workers and global experts in the field of public health have been advocating a policy of decriminalisation as best practice (Beyrer et al., 2015; Decker et al., 2015; Donovan et al., 2012; Fawkes, 2014; Kim, 2015). As we argue in this paper, policy reform through decriminalisation is also a central feature of best practice in transitioning programs as 'people who engage in sex work are entitled to respect for the full range of their human rights on the basis of equality and non-discrimination' and thus, policies and positions need to consider the full realisation of sex workers' rights (Amnesty International, 2016, p. 3).

For these reasons we have selectively drawn from the Mayhew and Mossman report, and note that the framing may not necessarily be in alignment with an understanding of sex work as work.

Developed as part of a consortium of community organisations that provide services to sex workers in Vancouver, Canada, Ouspenski's (2014) report aims to address service gaps, particularly around the provision of transitioning services, by reviewing existing literature on best practice and making recommendations for service provision (see Sandy, Meenagh and Nes-Iadicola (2019) for a description of the network of programs and services developed from Ouspenski's research). The report takes an intersectional approach, recognising the importance of including the voices and experiences of those within the sex industry in a way which reflects the diversity within the industry. It recognises sex work as work and argues for the need to separate out services for sex workers from services for those experiencing sexual exploitation, including sex trafficking, as these experiences cannot be considered work.[5] Ouspenski (2014) advocates for services geared toward a particular group to be developed and run by those with relevant lived experience, and for programs

[4] Many types of third-parties are involved in sex work ranging from drivers, landlords, receptionists, owners and supervisors of businesses and facilitators. These third-party figures are stigmatised and marginalised in the vast majority of sex work research. As Horning and Marcus argue the label of 'pimp' (or 'trafficker') is 'stigmatizing and derogatory in some cultures and inaccurate in others', especially in decriminalised contexts like New Zealand (2017, p. 3).
[5] See the evidence review report for a fuller discussion of the issues surrounding this simplistic framing of sex work (Sandy, Meenagh, & Nes-Iadicola, 2019).

geared toward sex workers to be evidence-based. While the report does not advocate for a particular legislative context, it distances itself from saviour/rescue projects, instead focusing on 'a provision of options that have been limited by governmental policies and societal attitudes around sex, sexuality, gender, race, class, and ability' (Ouspenski, 2014, p. 6). The report argues that any attempts to improve the lives of sex workers needs to be situated within broader efforts to improve the social conditions of all marginalised people. It argues for taking a holistic approach in the provision of services to sex workers, and particularly services geared toward transitioning, which should be situated 'as part of larger delivery of services, including harm reduction services' (Ouspenski, 2014, p. 42).

In developing this promising practice framework, we have drawn extensively from Ouspenski's report, and Mayhew and Mossman's report to a more limited extent, particularly their findings on peer engagement, stigma and discrimination, good practice, holistic approaches, multi-agency approaches and the idea of transitioning as a non-linear process.

In addition to the existing literature, this technical paper and promising practice framework has also drawn from the UNAIDS Guidance Note on HIV and sex work (UNAIDS, 2012). This guidance note is widely recognised as establishing best practice in promoting universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support in the context of adult sex work. We have drawn from this guidance note in order to create a 'programmatic emphasis that rests on three interdependent pillars' (UNAIDS, 2012, p. 3):

a) access to holistic care and support for all sex workers;
b) supportive environments and partnerships that facilitate access to services, including life choices and occupational alternatives to sex work for those who want to leave and expanding life choices, including the right to determine whether to remain in or leave sex work; and
c) action to address structural issues related to stigma and discrimination (UNAIDS, 2012).

These three pillars identified by UNAIDS have direct relevance in creating an effective, evidence-informed response to transitioning based on the centrality, inalienability and interdependence of rights and promoting their application in practice (UNAIDS, 2012). This is because the pillars are built on human rights principles that support a person's right to 'make informed choices about their lives, in a supportive environment that empowers them to make such choices free from coercion, violence and fear', and we believe this is a central element in designing and developing human-rights based approaches in transitioning programs (UNAIDS, 2012, p. 3).

As UNAIDS advises:

> each pillar is essential, and the three are mutually interdependent and should be coordinated and implemented simultaneously. Each pillar permits and envisions short-term measures and results, as well as longer-range structural measures that take longer to produce effects. These need to be pursued in combination and with equal urgency. (UNAIDS, 2012, p. 7)

The adaptation of this conceptual framework has been designed to ensure a coordinated human rights-based approach in transitioning programs and services in the context of sex work, and moreover, the findings from the stakeholder consultations clearly agree with a human-rights framing. As the following sections show, findings from the stakeholder consultations provide anecdotal evidence that transitioning programs are both necessary and needed in order to adequately respond to sex workers' human rights and the stigma and discrimination people working in the industry face.

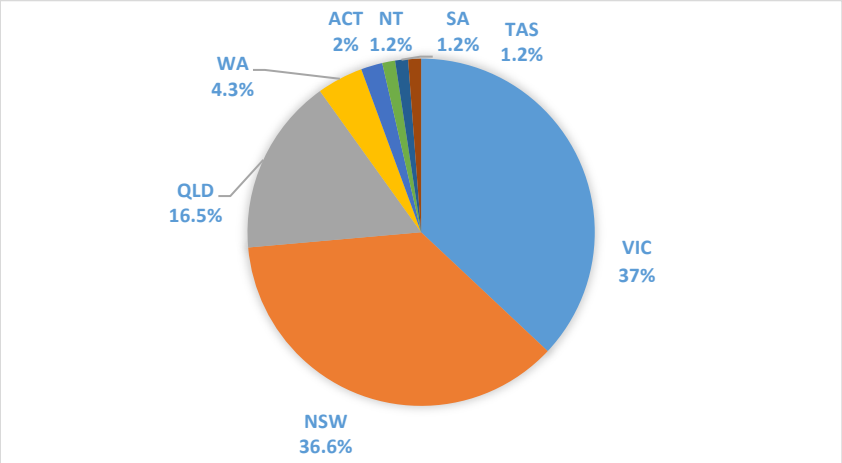
3 Understanding sex work

In this section of the paper, we provide a brief overview of the sex industry and regulations in Australia in order to understand how the different regulatory systems shape sex work practices around the country. We focus specifically on Victoria and consider the impacts of the state's existing sex work legislation in order to understand not only how this shapes sex work practices but also consider the interplay between the regulatory system and development of a best practice framework for transitioning programs.

3.1 A brief overview of Australia's sex industry

In Australia, the estimated total revenue from direct, legal sexual services was $185.9 million in 2017 (Allday, 2017, p. 3).[6] These data are from 314 businesses nationwide. As figure one shows, the vast majority of establishments are located in Victoria, closely followed by New South Wales and Queensland, with these three states accounting for 86.7% of industry revenue (Allday, 2017, p. 17). In 2017, it was estimated that Victoria accounted for 33.9% of industry revenue (Allday, 2017, p. 17). In further breaking down the provision of sexual services in 2017, it was estimated that 34.8% were brothel sexual services, while 32.7% were escort services (comprised of escort agencies and private workers) (Alllday, 2017, p. 13). Approximately 30% of services were hospitality and entertainment based and just under ten per cent were classified as other, with this category including legal street work (NSW only), erotic massage services and non-sexual services (Allday, 2017, p. 13).

Figure 1: Percentage of sex industry businesses across Australia, 2017



Source: IBIS World Industry Report – Brothel Keeping and Sex Worker Services in Australia, 2017.

Men are overwhelmingly the consumers within Australia's sex industry, with an estimated 94% of consumers being men and six per cent women and couples in 2017. From the ninety-four per cent of male consumers, 34.3% were men aged between 30 to 40 years followed by 31.8% aged 41 years and over and 27.7% were men aged 18-29 years (Allday, 2017, p. 15).

3.2 Regulatory contexts

In Australia, the regulatory approach to sex work differs with each state and territory and each different regulatory system is shaped by the legislature's views on sex work. For example, according to Pickering Maher and Gerard (2009), Victoria's regulatory approach is based on harm minimisation, promoting public health, protecting workers from violence and exploitation and the community from amenity impacts. As Pickering Maher and Gerard explain, this approach 'recognises that the potential exists within this market for specific social harms, but also that prohibition is unlikely to

[6] This estimate was produced with data from brothel activity and legal transactions for sexual services, and so the findings hold for licensed brothels, escort services and private workers.

result in the abolition of prostitution; rather it is more likely to expose vulnerable people to circumstances that are dangerous or exploitative' (2009, p. 1).

3.2.1 Sex work regulations in Australia

The regulation of sex work is an area that has been subject to significant legal reform in recent decades, with the trend moving away from prohibition in some states and territories. Legislation aiming to decriminalise sex work has been debated in some of the states and territories; however New South Wales is the only state to decriminalise sex work. In South Australia, several bills designed to decriminalise sex work have failed, but a bill passed the Upper House in 2017. Unfortunately, the government went into caretaker mode before the bill could be assented to and the existing legislation criminalising sex work remains in place. While decriminalisation is now widely regarded as the most appropriate approach to regulating sex work, as Table 1 demonstrates, the legislation in Australia ranges from criminalisation to legalisation and decriminalisation in the different states and territories (see table 1, overpage).

3.2.2 Sex work regulations and sex work in Victoria

Historically, Victoria has shifted between attempts to prohibit and regulate sex work. Until 1984 Victoria maintained a policy of prohibition and the criminalisation of sex work. However, criminalising legislation was essentially used as a means of attaining a form of de-facto regulation, with policing practices reflecting a policy of containment and control (Neave, 1994). The *Planning (Brothels) Act (1984)* legalised the brothel sector by introducing a formal brothel licensing system and criminal penalties attached to this that regulated the industry. This legislation, which not only signalled a shift from the suppression to regulation of brothels was also based upon an existing practice in which massage parlours were allowed to operate in the state provided they had a valid permit (Parliament of Victoria, 2011). This practice was first introduced in 1975 when the *Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Scheme* was amended to allow massage parlours to operate with council approval (Neave, 1994; Parliament of Victoria, 2011).

The *Planning (Brothels) Act (1984)* ended the prohibition on brothels after a government inquiry recommended allowing brothels to operate in the state legally by using permits as a way to control the location of businesses (Parliament of Victoria, 2011). In the late 1980s, the Victorian government engaged in a further round of law reform largely due to fears surrounding possible criminal involvement in brothel ownership (Neave, 1988; Pinto, Scandia, & Wilson, 1990). The Neave inquiry resulted in the *Prostitution Regulation Act (1986)*, which led to the regulation of the industry via brothel licensing (Neave, 1985). Essentially, the Neave review recommended the introduction of a system of legalisation via licensing while retaining criminalising legislation for the sectors of the industry not covered by the licensing regime. The *Prostitution Control Act (1994)* re-established legalisation via a licensing system, with significant amendments being made to the Act in 2008 (Parliament of Victoria, 2011). In 2010, the Act was re-named the *Sex Work Act (1994)*.

The current laws governing sex work in Victoria concern more than one statute and are quite complex. It is not illegal to provide sexual services in Victoria provided the exchange of sex for money is between consenting adults. However, the ways in which the exchange takes place are regulated and controlled under the *Sex Work Act (1994)* (as discussed above) as well as the *Sex Work Regulations Act (2016),* including the *Sex Work (Fees) Regulations (2014)*, and the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act (2008).* The *Sex Work Act* is the main statute governing sex work and it is this Act which sets out the state's licensing system.

The long history of licensing in Victoria has led to the development of a two-tiered system comprised of a 'legal' or regulated sector in Victoria made up with licensed brothels and escort agencies and registered private workers (Scarlet Alliance, 2017). The regulated sector, however, is estimated to account for some 40 percent of trade, with the remainder of the industry unregulated (Morton et al., 1999; Harcourt, Egger & Donovan, 2005). The imbalance arises because licensing deals primarily with brothel-based sex work, which is seen as being relatively easy to control, but as Harcourt and Donovan (2005) argue, it is only one of many forms of sex work.

Table 1: Sex work legislation, Australia

State	Regulatory system	Street-based sex work	Brothel (commercial)	Escort/private	Relevant legislation
Victoria	Regulated licensing system (the use of a prophylactic is required)	Criminalised	Brothels have to obtain a licence through the Business Licensing Authority and adhere to strict licence conditions. Brothels are regulated by local council planning bylaws and must comply with the requirements in the *Planning and Environment Act (1987)*. The *Public Health and Wellbeing Act (2008)* stipulates that safe sex supplies are provided to brothel-based sex workers at no cost.	Private sex work entails obtaining a permit (granted under the Planning and Environment Act 1987) to operate as a Small-Owner Operated (exempt) Brothel. Private workers are required to obtain a SWA number and adhere to council requirements (i.e. working with a maximum of one other person apart from one's self and working in a space that is located 200 metres away from places of worship, schools, hospitals, etc). Escort agencies act as an intermediary between the escort and client. Agencies must supply some sort of electronic device to ensure the escort is able to contact the licensee/manager while working.	Sex Work Act (1994) Sex Work Regulations (2016)
New South Wales	Decriminalised system (since 1995)	Decriminalised Must not be within view of schools, churches, residential homes and hospitals.	Legal to run sexual service premises with appropriate planning permission. Brothels, massage parlours, and private workers working from residences are all considered sexual service premises. All sexual service premises must follow local council planning guidelines.		The Brothels Legislation Amendment Act (2007) Summary Offences Act (1988)
Queensland	Regulated licensing system (the use of a prophylactic is required)	Criminalised	Sex work is lawful within a licensed brothel; however, outcall sex work from a brothel is prohibited by law.	Working privately is permitted; however, there are strict requirements, including workers being unable to work in pairs. Another person is permitted (in the context of providing security) if in possession of a crowd controller's licence and using and paying a driver is prohibited unless they possess a current crowd controller's license. Strict advertising laws apply to all sex workers: advertising must not describe the sexual services offered, encourage working in the industry, or that services are connected to massage services. Online	Prostitution Act (1999) Criminal Code (1899)

				advertising must be submitted for approval to the Prostitution Licensing Authority.	
Northern Territory	Regulated licensing system	Criminalised	Criminalised (sex workers cannot work from the same place where the service was organised).	Working privately is lawful as long as a sex worker does not work with another person. This includes a driver, receptionist, security, and other sex workers. Private workers cannot work from the place where sexual services are organised, and they are not required to register with the Licensing Commission. Registering as an escort agency allows a sex worker to work with other people; however, conditions limit eligibility (i.e. no violence/drug related convictions). A manager needs to be appointed, and all workers must obtain a certificate from the police.	Prostitution Regulation Act (2004)
Western Australia	Sex work is mostly criminalised; however, escorting and private sex work are a 'grey area'	Criminalised	Criminalised	Although the legislation states it is illegal to live off the earnings of a sex worker, this is usually interpreted to permit private sex work to take place without legal repercussions.	Prostitution Act (2000) Criminal Code Act Compilation (1913)
Tasmania	Private sex work is legal provided that no more than two people are working together	Criminalised	Criminalised	Private sex work is considered legal.	Sex Industry Offences Act (2005)
Australian Capital Territory	Regulated licensing system (the use of a prophylactic is required)	Criminalised	Brothels can operate lawfully but need to register with The Department of Fair Trading. Brothels are not restricted in the number of rooms they can have, but they are limited to the industrial suburbs of Mitchell and Fyshwick.	Private sex workers are seen as sole operator brothels or escorts and need to register with The Department of Fair Trading one week before starting work. Private workers cannot share the same workplace; however, there are no additional restrictions on the location from which they can work.	Prostitution Act (1992)
South Australia*	Commercial sex work is not considered illegal, but bylaws render most sex work as illegal	Criminalised	Criminalised	Criminalised	Summary Offences Act (1953) & Criminal Law Consolidation Act (1935-1976)

Sources: Puddy, R. 2019; Scarlet Alliance, 2017; *Statutes Amendment (Decriminalisation of Sex Work) Bill 2018* (SA). *The Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill (Statutes Amendment Bill) passed the Upper House in 2017 with no amendments. On 9 May 2018, Tammy Franks introduced the bill to the Legislative Council. The bill is scheduled to be reviewed in June 2019.

3.2.2.1 Sexually explicit entertainment

As discussed above, the term sex worker is often interpreted quite broadly, however, the regulation of sex work in Victoria is nuanced, complex, and varies in accordance to type of sex work performed. Sexually explicit entertainment commonly takes place in gentlemen's clubs or strip clubs; however, such entertainment can also take place in a variety of non-traditional venues if a person works as an out-call stripper (or strip-a-gram) for different agencies, peep show strippers (i.e. at adult retail venues) or as topless waitressing/barmaids. Unlike brothels, most strip clubs are regulated by the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation (VCGLR) and the *Liquor Control Reform Act (1994)*. Section 3(1) of the Act defines sexually explicit entertainment to 'mean live entertainment that may be performed for an audience, by a person performing an act of an explicit sexual nature, but does not include the provision of sexual services within the meaning of section 3(1) of the Sex Work Act 1994' (p. 13). Venues seeking to provide sexually explicit entertainment must notify the VCGLR of their intent to do so and must comply with the conditions set out by them in order to avoid penalties and maintain their license. Venues that operate without a liquor license are exempted from regulation by the VCGLR. In accordance with Clause 22.11 of the *Melbourne Planning Scheme (2018)*, these venues are regulated by the local council where they are located. From the available information on sexually explicit entertainment and sex work legislation and regulation, it may be that outcall stripping from an agency is not regulated.

Currently, Victoria has twelve licensed strip clubs. Of the twelve clubs, five are described as 'non-touching' venues. This means that customers cannot touch a stripper's buttocks or breasts. In the seven touching venues, customers are permitted to touch the breasts and buttocks of a stripper but must adhere to the *Sex Work Act* and refrain from any activity that could be interpreted as a sexual service. The 'non-touching' versus 'touching' policies are enforced at a club's discretion.

Strippers (whether working for an agency or club) are classed as subcontractors. Strippers conducting their services in a club pay a flat 'house fee' for the use of the premises. In contrast, strippers operating from an agency will pay a commission fee for each booking undertaken. Outcall stripping differs from working in a strip club as strippers working for an agency work only when they are booked for a function. However, when working in a venue, strippers pay a house fee and this means many workers only make profit when customers purchase dances (RhED, 2018, p. 19).

Although classed as subcontractors, strippers working in strip clubs commonly adhere to some employee-like requirements. This includes a dress code, minimum shift requirements, stage show requirements, fines, and other policies that individual clubs/agencies may stipulate and alter in their contractual agreement or via informal means of communication (RhED, 2018, p. 19). The contracts agreed to between venues and strippers tend to be quite varied in their descriptions and obligations and usually include the venue's policies, including the degree of touching deemed permissible in order to ensure the venue is not in contravention of the *Sex Work Act (1994)* (RhED, 2018, p. 19).

3.2.2.2 Licensed sector

According to Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV), Victoria's licensed industry has been fairly static for the past few years (CAV, 2014, p. 19). As of July 2013, the regulated sector was comprised of 97 licensed brothels (physical buildings) with 139 licensed sex work service providers (CAV, 2014). There are more licensees than businesses because more than one licensee can run a business in partnership with another licensee. Licensed sex work service providers are licensed to operate different business types, including brothel only (46 licensees), escort agency only (18 licensees) and combined brothel and escort agency (75 licensees) (CAV, 2014). In addition, there were 741 approved brothel managers and 525 registered small owner-operators (CAV, 2014).

The Brothel Licensing Authority (BLA) oversees and manages brothel licensing in Victoria. Local councils or relevant authorities issue permits to operate brothels to licensees or people exempt from requiring a license. Sex work is controlled under provisions contained in the *Sex Work Act (1994)* which is enforced by Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV) and Victoria Police. Licensing controls and management is the jurisdiction of the BLA and CAV and planning restrictions are controlled by local councils.

Workers within licensed brothels and escort agencies have the right to refuse to see a client, without fine or penalty, if they deem the situation unsafe or the client potentially violent (Scarlet Alliance, 2017). Escort agencies must accurately describe workers to clients and provide workers with means of communicating with the licensee or approved manager while they are working, and workers within licensed brothels must be provided with a free supply of condoms and lubricants, clean linen and showers with a continuous and adequate supply of hot and cold water for their own and their clients use (Scarlet Alliance, 2017). Sex workers within the licensed sector are paid a percentage of the fee charged to clients. While there is no legislation governing how fees are split, reports indicate that common practice is for sex workers to receive between 50-70% of the fee (RhED, 2018; Rowe, 2011; Scarlet Alliance, 2015). Sex workers were required to undergo monthly STI testing until October 2012, when the screening requirement was changed to three monthly (Scarlet Alliance, 2017). While some sex workers find the requirement of mandatory STI testing useful for ensuring they remain in good health (Pickering, Maher, & Gerard, 2009), mandatory STI testing has been critiqued as an unnecessary burden on the healthcare system and as creating a barrier to STI and HIV prevention (Jeffreys, Fawkes, & Stardust, 2012).

3.2.2.3 Unlicensed sector

In Victoria, the number of brothel licenses granted falls short of the demand and this has forced most sex workers in the state to operate illegally: prior research suggests that Victoria may have one of the largest street-based industries in Australia (Harcourt, Egger, & Donovan, 2005). According to Pickering, Maher and Gerard (2009) estimates on the number of unlicensed brothels vary considerably, ranging from under 70 (Chen et al., 2010) to over 300 based on claims made in the media from 2003 onward. In 2017, Project Respect, a Melbourne-based support and referral service for trafficked women, estimated 500 unlicensed brothels in the state; however, no information is provided as to how this statistic was derived (Project Respect, 2017). Chen and colleagues' research, based on a collation of advertisements and followed up with onsite visits, documented that the unlicensed sector is much smaller than is generally believed (Chen at al., 2010). In 2012, the Victoria Police Sex Industry Coordination Unit (SICU) was established to crackdown on unlicensed sex work activities, however, this work has been complicated by the difficulties faced in establishing the number of unlicensed businesses (also demonstrated in the research), coupled with the challenges presented by the relative ease in which establishments can be opened and closed (Capone, 2017a).

In the late 1990s Victoria Police's Vice Squad was disbanded largely because of high levels of corruption involving members of the squad (OPI, 2007, pp. 65-67). After the squad was disbanded, there was a degree of uncertainty surrounding the policing of unlicensed brothels and whether this was in the jurisdiction of the Victoria Police, CAV or local councils (Parliament of Victoria, 2011). This led to the introduction of significant amendments to the *Sex Work Act* in 2008 that clarified responsibilities as well as further tightening restrictions on the issuing of licenses (Parliament of Victoria, 2011). Despite these changes to the legislation, an ongoing theme in media reporting about sex work is illegal sex work activity and lack of enforcement, particularly around the links between licenced and unlicensed brothels and organised crime, enforcement officers accepting bribes from unlicensed brothels and allegations of links with human trafficking (see, for example, Capone 2017a, b; Toscano, 2014).

Working conditions within the unlicensed sector can vary significantly (Rowe, 2011). As work within this sector is criminalised, this presents greater risks to workers. Unlicensed brothels can be a particular focus of policing efforts, including raids (Rowe, 2011; Toscano, 2014). Pickering, Maher and Gerard (2009) and Rowe (2011) describe a higher demand for unsafe practices, and higher engagement in unsafe practices within the unlicensed sector. Likewise, both sources report higher rates of pay within this sector, as workers are able to keep a larger proportion of the fees charged to clients. The Tuesday Court commenced operation in October 2003, and this court works in partnership with the St Kilda police to divert street-based sex workers from the criminal justice system to health and drug treatment services (CAV, 2007, p. 16). The aim of this court is to keep street-based sex workers out of prison and the criminal justice process, which can reduce convictions (that also appear on police checks), and encourage workers who would not normally use structured health services to engage with counselling and health treatment services (CAV, 2007, p. 16-17).

The structure of the Victorian sex industry around 'legal' parameters has seen the development of a hierarchy of workers, with different health and safety needs in each sector. As Rowe (2011) argues, the net effect of legalisation may be the creation of better working conditions for heavily regulated workers alongside forms of work characterised by a lack of supervision and poor accessibility that may leave sex workers more vulnerable to exploitation and victimisation (see also Dwyer, 2016).

It is important to note the range of possible employment patterns in Victoria's sex industry. This is because research has shown a broad range of employment patterns and histories among workers, with no single pattern of employment dominating individual work histories (Pickering, Maher, & Gerard, 2009). While some workers may work mostly in the licensed brothel sector, others may move between different sectors of the industry, incorporating brothel work with unlicensed sex work and independent private work (Pickering, Maher and Gerard, 2009, p. 8). This means there is significant worker mobility between the sectors, including movement between licensed and unlicensed businesses and into and out of private and/or escort work and some workers may practice private work in combination with brothel or other forms of sex work (Pickering, Maher, & Gerard, 2009, p. 9).

The need for transitioning services differs, to some extent, depending upon the legal context. Across legal contexts, there is a need for support with addressing macro level stigma and discrimination towards sex work and sex workers. This is a challenge discussed in more depth throughout this report and the accompanying evidence review report. When sex work is criminalised, there may be a greater need for transitioning services and supports. It is important to note that when sex work, or some aspects of sex work, are criminalised, it is not policed the same in all contexts. For instance, after the change of federal legislation on sex work in 2014 which criminalised the purchasing of sexual services, the Vancouver city police made it their official policy not to police sex work but to take a harm reduction approach (Vancouver Police Department, 2013). In this context, there may not necessarily be a high demand for transitioning services, and workers may not be leaving the industry due to a crisis situation induced by policing efforts. Conversely, in South Australia senior police officials have publicly expressed opposition to the proposed decriminalisation of sex work and supported harsher policing, which has led to an intense crackdown targeting sex workers (Dowdell, 2017; Hanifie, 2017; Jones, 2017a, b). In the context of 'cleaning up' the industry ahead of proposed decriminalisation, which the SA Police Commissioner Grant Stevens has said would be 'foolhardy', and the unprecedented levels of policing, the need for transitioning services and support becomes quite urgent as this active policing makes engaging in sex work more risky (Dowdell, 2017). In this context, transitioning may occur primarily as a crisis driven response, an issue we return to the in latter parts of the report. Importantly though, in this context transitioning services serve as a bandaid and not a solution. Sex work is made unsafe by the policing of it, and therefore it is the policing – and not the sex work – that needs to be addressed.

4 Best practice framework for transitioning programs

The framing of a transitioning program needs careful consideration. Often, transitioning programs are premised on the idea that providing alternatives can end exploitation in sex work, and this framing can lead to programs adopting a paternalistic approach. What becomes an issue with these approaches is that sex work is seen as a less legitimate occupation and as a consequence, labour rights become a secondary consideration, or perhaps irrelevant. As Sullivan highlights, there are deep flaws with this line of reasoning and programmatic approach:

> It is easy to say that alternative work should be made available to women working in prostitution but harder to say exactly how this could be done (and incomes maintained) or even why it should be done (especially if sex work is not seen to have a universal/essentialist meaning and if women are seen to have at least some agentic capacity as workers in a globalized world economy). (2003, p. 78)

Transitioning programs, then need to be multi-pronged in order to meet sex workers' diverse needs and ensure fair labour conditions in the industry and, as Sullivan suggests, if the program adopts a sex work as work framework, the focus needs to extend beyond providing workers with assistance to leave the industry. While transitioning programs need to include this assistance, they do not need to be limited by it. As Bowen argues:

> Depicting sex work as something merely to be escaped is a limiting framework that suppresses the experiences of those who live sex work as work; those who supplement square work with sex work; and those who view sex work as an opportunity to ameliorate structural oppressions such as patriarchy, capitalism, and colonialism experienced as gender inequality, poverty and racism. (2015, p. 434)

As Jules Kim highlights, some workers may want assistance to leave the industry and retraining to find an alternative livelihood, other workers may want assistance in creating safer workspaces, moving and changing jobs within the industry, gaining new skills or strengthening existing ones:

> … [best practice is] about supporting sex workers where they're at, to support them. So, it really doesn't have those preconceptions about what sex workers need, or what they should be doing. So, I think transitioning can be a lot of things. It might be transitioning to another workplace or it could be transitioning out of work, or it could be getting some further education on something, or it might be working in another job completely. (Interview with Jules Kim, Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association)

While for Michael transitioning helped in affirming his choice to stay in sex work:

> I've moved in and out a couple of times. I went off and ran some fairly high-powered businesses and had a Porsche and a yacht at one stage and then gave that all up. The next time I decided to move out I just [job removed – decided to take on an entry level position]. But suggesting entry level jobs like selling tickets, working in a call centre, et cetera, it was pretty shit, but it got me out of the house and for me it made me decide, no, I really like sex work. (Interview with Michael)

It is clear that more nuanced solutions developed from a bottom-up perspective are needed in program design and implementation. This is essential in transitioning programs because, as Bowen highlights, what is often missing from the picture is the 'range of experiences where sex workers as active agents shape their futures around the barriers that exist because of the social positions we relegate them to' (2015, p. 434). There are several ways in which transitioning programs can achieve this, and we discuss each of these below.

4.1 Promising practice in program frameworks and logic

4.1.1 Sex work as work

The provision of transitioning services within an environment that does not recognise sex work as a valid career choice further contributes to the stigmatisation of sex workers, and therefore is an ineffective service delivery model, Amelia explained:

> People want to transition from one career choice to another all the time. It's that simple. I used to be a [job removed], hated it and went and did retraining into [training removed]. Hated that as well, but let's not go there. People make career transitions all the time and it doesn't mean that their previous career wasn't work; it just means that it's not fitting for them anymore for whatever reason. (Interview with Amelia)

As Ouspenski (2014) argues, a social justice approach is required, a point also highlighted by participants in the study. For example, Lisa discusses approaches to working as being 'non-stigmatising and respectful and empowering and respect[ing] the idea that only some people might want to transition. That the barriers are actually the institutions rather than people's personal problems' (Interview with Lisa). Jules Kim also argued for the need for a social justice approach: 'transitioning also means a lot of things right … the thing that you need to think about is the sensitivities that there are around that lack of recognition of sex work as a skilled job and this idea that we need retraining' (Interview with Jules Kim, Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association).

For Jill Martin, the need for a social justice approach was couched in terms of sex work-related stigma:

> It's definitely about the stigma and discrimination attached to the industry. It's very hard for someone to say I was professionally independently employed for 10 years as an escort and have A-Z skills and people just see sex worker and think eff. Irrelevant experience, whereas it's not at all. (Interview with Jill Martin, RhED)

This view was shared by most participants, including Michael: 'we all suffer from what we call internalised whorephobia, so getting rid of that so people have confidence to go out and start looking, giving them ideas of where to go and where to start' (Interview with Michael).

The framing of sex work as work within transitioning programs promotes an understanding of transitioning as a non-liner process (and thus reentry not as a failure) and is not predicated on the idea of involvement in sex work as pathology. Instead, it leads to the framing of sex work as skilled work, identified by research participants as an essential element of promising practice:

> [promising practice is] that you're not trying to get someone out of the industry. You may just be trying to help them get that second job. We're pretty good at not having a golden rule that your aim must be to exit the industry. We're pretty good at saying just transitioning into alternative employment options, without having to give up sex work. That could make people feel like they've failed if they have to give up sex work when that's the one thing keeping them going until the next thing is really propped up for them. (Interview with Jill Martin, RhED)

> [promising practice is] about exploring alternate career opportunities because then that's acknowledging that actually, the work that people are doing, it's a career. It's a chosen career. I think that's really critical to acknowledge that. (Interview with Mia)

> I spend a lot of time often explaining or getting sex workers to realise how skilled they are and even though they might not be able to tell it, to a prospective employer, their skills around personality and judging people and summing stuff, the fact that they've been running their own business for five to ten years or whatever. A lot of people don't realise that they've been a small business, even though they have. It might be as obvious as the nose on your face, but it was just something that they were doing and, you can do your books, you can get tax done, you can organise this, you can organise that; the ones who travel around, look you're great at organising travel and tours and best prices for hotels, et cetera. (Interview with Michael)

4.1.2 Intersectional lens

O'Neill and Campbell (2010) highlight the importance of an intersectional approach, explaining how this enables a shift away from the structure/agency debates that continue to shape most thinking about and approaches to sex work. Transitioning programs need to move beyond these debates because, as Bowen (2015) highlights this ultimately reduces people's involvement in sex work to a series of complicated factors related to structure and agency that may actually hinder exit. Using an intersectional lens shifts the focus away from the structure/agency debates that shape much of the discussions about sex work and allow sex work to be situated in its social, cultural and historical context. The historical and cultural specificity of sex work, and the structure, significance and character of sex work is a product of many factors, including:

> … practices of economic development; histories of colonial occupation; the presence of raced and gendered patterns of inequality; the presence of raced and gendered patterns of desire; the nature of normative sexual practices; the perceived relationship between sexual practice and identity; and so on. (Sullivan, 2003, p. 75)

Ouspenski (2014) takes an intersectional approach, situating sex work within broader structural factors, and this allows them to shift from a monolithic explanation of sex work, and factors related to structure and agency to more materialist cultural approaches that allow consideration of the complex realties of transitioning. During our interview, Ava raised the importance of understanding the broader structural factors:

> The issues are the stigma, recognising how the internalised stigma affects people because there's a lot of different ways that plays out, and how that fear of discrimination, which is probably the biggest barrier [affects people] and also that level of isolation that comes with [sex work] … [sex workers are] isolated in one way or another. They're isolated within their legal requirement or they're isolated in the culture. So, what we were finding was that people were [wanting a] safe environment in which they weren't going to be pressured to feel that they needed to exit, that they needed to make a decision there and then or they needed to do that [to get help] … [not a lot of] people come in to get increased computer skills. They come in to get a safe environment to talk things through to work out what they want. (Interview with Ava)

As Bowen highlights an intersectional lens reveals how transitioning may be:

> … affected by intersecting socio-structural positions, biographies, skills, dispositions, types, and locations of sex work; compounded by the diverse ways that people engage with the work, set their schedules, and limit or expand the services on offer. Some experience sex work as harmful, some as functional, others fully enjoy their work and see it as no more risky than forms of 'square' labour. (Bowen, 2015, p. 434)

By adopting an intersectional lens, the features of best practice approaches Ouspenski (2014) identifies are: multi-agency partnerships, holistic interventions, sex worker-led, peer support, outreach basis, awareness raising, and other practical considerations. Additionally, an intersectional lens can allow an appreciation of the idea that sex work is experienced as both exploitative and liberating:

> people were coming into the program – it could have been for any reasons: either assaulted in the workplace, burnt out, other issues like being arrested, the closure of their business. So they were exiting out of crisis, not necessarily out of desire to leave and sometimes burn out in particular or just isolation. When they can become a part of the fold of the community that we were trying to create and [foster within the organisation] and our peer education work, that would actually respond to a lot of those needs, and so the need to exit reduced. People just didn't exit. So what we found was that we were able to respond [to those needs and they] … realised that [exiting is] not necessarily [what they wanted] … then you actually can have that option in – if you do want to exit you can but if you want to stay in the industry, you can as well. (Interview with Ava)

4.1.3 Resilience-based model

Burnes, Long and Schept (2011) highlight the biased assumptions and methodological flaws that characterise the literature on sex work that have resulted in psychopathological interpretations of sex workers. As a result, they argue that many interventions further marginalise sex workers and perpetuate a poor practice paradigm. When discussing this, they note how psychopathology ultimately creates a model of sex work as inherently exploitative and harmful to workers and supports a practice of downplaying, and indeed ignoring, sex workers' coping skills. Dominant models and understandings of sex work tend to frame sex workers as:

> … mentally sick, unable to keep other jobs, and abnormal in their routine behavior. This paradigm also creates an adversarial relationship between sex workers and legal bodies, mandating that sex work should be illegal because of its perceived detriment to and deviance within society. (Burnes, Long & Schept, 2011, p. 138)

Burnes and colleagues suggest a resilience-based model to replace psychopathology as an area of promising practice. A resilience-based focus, they claim, can alter psychological assessments of sex workers, challenge common assumptions as they relate to sex worker psychology, positively influence therapeutic interventions and can encourage an alternative narrative:

> … instead of a psychopathology-based understanding of sex work, a resilience lens might focus on an economic framework by which individuals attempt to gain employment and support themselves [and] encourage strengths-based understandings. (Burnes, Long & Schept, 2011, p. 140)

Furthermore, a resiliency-based model encourages exploration of how sex workers access and develop positive strategies to overcome and cope with trauma. When combined with an intersectional approach, it may help reveal some of the current gaps in understanding transitioning, and in particular the idea of duality discussed by Bowen (2013) wherein people engage in both sex work and square work simultaneously. As Bowen (2015, p. 434) suggests this can help enrich our understandings of sex work and transitioning as duality was a common experience among participants in their research, yet, duality remains under-researched. For Bowen (2013, p. 89), duality represents a resistance to the dichotomised ways in which sex work involvement is conceptualised in transitioning research and programs: 'one is either in, or out, successful or defeated' and the idea could also be a way to achieve a mode of gradual transition that transcends binary thinking, for example, exiting/re-entry.

In their research, 'dual life participants do not view sex work as being something a person has to be in or out', instead they maintained that duality was the 'best way for them to be involved in sex work' as it allowed workers to 'take advantage of opportunities in either sex work or square work' as they arose and working in both simultaneously can quell negative effects of both, for example, work shortages in square work and burn out in sex work (Bowen, 2103, p. 74-75). And, as the participants in our study clearly suggest, adopting this approach and understanding is essential in the development of promising practice in program frameworks and approaches.

4.2 Essential elements of promising practice

In distilling the essential elements of promising practice from the literature, Ouspenski (2014) and Mayhew and Mossman (2007) identify these as: sex worker led; holistic interventions; dealing with changes of mind; facilitating free choice; dedicated services and brokerage; building trusting relationships; multi-agency partnerships; adequate resourcing; public education; outreach; peer and program staff support; awareness raising; and other practical considerations detailed below. In considering the essential features of promising practice in transitioning programs, we have drawn on these elements identified in the literature, which align with findings from the stakeholder consultations.

4.2.1 *Sex worker-led: self-determination and autonomy*

Ouspenski (2014) speaks to the importance of ensuring programs and policies geared toward inclusion of particular groups are effectively engaging those groups. The report provides some

examples of where service delivery has gone astray: locating services for male sex workers within gay-oriented services; focusing sex work services on homelessness and/or substance use; and framing sex work as deviance, thereby focusing on 'corrective' programs. Importantly, Ouspenski notes that a 'single focus on exiting can deter sex workers from engaging in services' (2014, p. 42). In order to counter this, Ouspenski recommends services be provided through sex work agencies on a drop-in basis. Given that sex workers can be reluctant to access services for fear of whorephobia, having appropriate services provided through a sex worker organisation can help to build trust with various service providers. This was an essential feature of promising practice identified by most participants in the study, for example Tanya Morrison said, 'the most important thing is that it really is sex worker led' (Interview with Tanya Morrison, NZPC). Jane reflected that 'in a world of absolute best practice sex workers' own organisations should be fully funded to provide services for their own community', explaining:

> for a marginalised and stigmatised community, we don't trust people outside our community and people that come in that are not a part of our community don't understand the issues we face. They're not able to access these spaces that we are in and they can't deliver services appropriately. (Interview with Jane Green, Vixen Collective)

For Lexxie, being sex worker led was 'pivotal in any response', and in transitioning programs this becomes essential because of the issues surrounding 'exiting':

> I think that comes back to trust. Workers – I know for myself that talking to another sex worker, I know that they get what it is that I'm talking about. They're not sitting there questioning me, like questioning in their head whether I'm trafficked, am I a sex slave, do I need saving, am I forced to do this; they're not sitting there questioning that or wondering why did you decide to do this. As a sex worker, I know that they already don't care. They're not questioning any of that because they've been there done that themselves. They haven't just read a book; they've got that experience behind them. On the things that are really important to have in a sex worker organisation – can I just jump back and say being a peer, in the gold star range, being a peer is also super important. (Interview with Lexxie Jury, SWOP ACT)

This point was raised by participants like Lexxie, who had a solid experience of sex work as well as participants working in the area who did not have this lived experience, including Catriona Hodgson:

> I think, obviously sex workers are the experts in managing their own lives, and potentially have a whole heap of useful information to share with their peers around what's worked well for them, what hasn't worked, how you can get around that. We're not necessarily best placed to do that. (Interview with Catriona Hodgson, RhED)

Amelia likewise saw the program being sex worker-led as a 'key component' of best practice and spoke of the importance a lived experience of sex work provides in this area:

> … unless you've got lived experience of being a sex worker, no matter how many friends you've got that are sex workers, how many books you've read, how much research you've done, unless you've been on the ground and actually done those transactions, you can't possibly completely identify to what it feels like and what the experience is like. (Interview with Amelia)

Ahi also reflected on the value of peer-led programs and the incorporation of sex workers' lived experiences:

> … the really crucial thing is that it's peer based, that it's all peer led. So, when sex workers all tend to stop doing sex work and start doing something else, we think the best people to understand what it is that they need and how best to support them with doing that are people who have done it themselves, so other sex workers. (Interview with Ahi Wi-Hongi, NZPC)

The importance of transitioning programs being sex worker-led cannot be understated, and this is not only because of the valuable insight from sex workers own lived experiences (which is seen as an essential feature of best practice), but given the controversy surrounding this area of service provision, the potential that exists to stigmatise and alienate sex workers. Ava spoke about how she

was challenged to re-think the place of a transitioning program under a rights-based approach to sex work:

> I've got to say that when [the idea of putting in a tender for a transitioning program] went up for a vote over and over again over the years, I voted against us doing it. Because from my perspective I was thinking, hang on a minute, how can we do this within a sex workers rights program framework and yet be supporting people in leaving, which I just couldn't settle in my mind how we could do that. So, this is why it is important to have sex workers involved in developing and running the program, because I'm one of the ones that we have to satisfy, and if I can't see that it's being promoted well, then there's a lot of sex workers out there who are … going to feel alienated and isolated from our organisation. (Interview with Ava)

Alison saw the program being sex worker-led as 'crucial' because of the 'sensitives in this area' (Interview with Alison). For Olivia, the value of the program being sex worker led was the different knowledge that sex workers bring into programming and engagement strategies (Interview with Olivia). For Sarah it was 'essential that a peer runs' the program; however, she suggested that careful consideration was needed to make sure peers involved in the program had an anti-stigma approach and did not embrace the moralism that can come with reformation-like or born-again experiences that some workers may undergo as part of transitioning out of sex work:

> I think it's essential that a peer runs it. If there is to be any kind of exiting program it should definitely be peer run. But I don't know that it should have to be someone who's exited. I worry that would be a bit like an ex-smoker running a quit smoking workshop. I worry that it would become even more moralistic and judge-y. I think that if, I feel as a current sex worker, I can very comfortably assist someone who no longer wishes to do this job, because I'm comfortable in the fact that I love this job but not everyone does. (Interview with Sarah)

Similar to Sarah, P.G. also saw best practice as the program being sex worker-led and noted the importance of involving peers with anti-stigma approaches, but she did not necessarily see this as a characteristic only relevant to workers who may have left the industry:

> … it's really difficult for people who are not peers, specifically, but even for some peers it's not necessarily a guarantee to be non-stigmatising towards other sex workers. So, having an anti-stigma approach and constantly questioning one's self and one's practice is very important. (Interview with P.G. Macioti, Postdoctoral Fellow (UTS & UWA) and former outreach coordinator Hydra e.V., Berlin).

Finally, Jules defined best practice as being 'a program that was run by sex workers. It would have to be peer [based]' and went on to argue that:

> … there's a lot of criticism as well around sex worker organisations and this idea that we only help people that want to stay in the sex industry. That's certainly not the case. It is support for sex workers regardless of where they're at. (Interview with Jules Kim, Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association)

Contrary to popular perceptions, most sex worker organisations we spoke with during the research provided informal transitioning services and assistance for workers who wanted to leave the industry, reduce the hours they worked, undertake study, gain volunteering experience or maintain dual careers.

Our research participants had diverse suggestions about how organisations could develop a sex worker-led transitioning program, including:

> first of all, in the position role … the very first thing needs to have been a sex worker … your board needs to be peer based, so at all levels it needs to be sex workers for sex workers. (Interview with Lexxie Jury, SWOP ACT)

In order to achieve this, P.G. recommended that peers should run the program and:

> … [peers] should be the ones on whose consultations the programs are based on: they are the ones who actually have the knowledge. So, at all levels they should be involved. They should … design the program, well, help design it, if it's not a peer writing it up. But it should be based on consultation with sex workers, as wide as possible because sex workers are a hugely diverse community. (Interview with P.G. Macioti, Postdoctoral Fellow (UTS & UWA) and former outreach coordinator Hydra e.V., Berlin)

Amelia mentioned the recruitment of sex workers in key positions (especially in front-facing positions with direct contact with program clients) and organisational cultural values that place value and importance on sex work experience as essential in selection criteria. In addition to this, Amelia not only talked about the importance of including sex workers in program design and implementation but also providing appropriate training and support:

> … we'd be incorporating sex workers in that program design, definitely. Whoever was going to be delivering the program, be it one person or a number of different people, they would be offered the appropriate training before that. It's more about getting a peer on board and then giving them the training rather than employing somebody that isn't a peer that's already got the skills and doesn't need the training. (Interview with Amelia)

Jill suggested that one way in which peers could be incorporated in the program was to recruit from within program participants:

> … obviously, it's nice to think that someone who has been through the program could take on a role as one of the Pathways workers. Having people with that experience who can then come in and they themselves identify things that they felt could be done better. I don't think you can beat that. Maybe even a client group as a reference group that the team is constantly feeding proposed initiatives into for guidance on applicability [and asking] do you think that is something you would be interested in or could be successful? (Interview with Jill Martin, RhED)

Michael shared similar ideas on how a peer-based program could be developed:

> … especially if it's peer-based with people who've had consultations with people who've gone through that process of leaving, attempting to leave, leaving, coming back, all that sort of thing. If they're experienced around that rather than people who've just come into the industry. We'd be looking at a steering committee, probably as people who have experience of what it's like and how they got around résumé gaps and all those sort of things you have. Looking after the sick mother, travelling in Asia, working in the restaurant kitchens, sorry no references, all that sort of thing … Because you need the ideas and the experience to come out of that because that also then builds for us with the people who you are dealing with. (Interview with Michael)

The importance of peers in the development and delivery of transitioning services cannot be overstated. Stigma is a particularly poignant issue for sex workers who want to transition, which makes it important for services to be informed by lived experience and a non-stigmatising understanding of not only sex work as work, but what that work looks like in practice. As the stakeholder interviews showed, sex worker-led transitioning services are seen as more trustworthy and better able to understand the particular needs and challenges sex workers face in transitioning both within and outside of the sex industry.

4.2.2 Person-first and client-driven approach

Ouspenski's report is resoundingly clear on the point that transitioning services need to be 'individually tailored to fit specific needs of the client' (2014, p. 48). During consultations, almost all participants raised this as the first point: 'good practice is just being client-centred. Just asking the person what they want to do, why do they want to – and then helping them to achieve that' (Interview with Sarah). For Lexxie:

> … [good practice is] about finding out what the worker wants to do, where she wants to go, how can we help her to get to do what she wants to do, whether it's a course or help her apply for a job, or any of that kind of stuff. It's about letting the worker guide us, not we guide them … person-centred I think it's called. (Interview with Lexxie Jury, SWOP ACT)

Gabby shared this view: 'it's not about rescuing, it's about best practice, it's not about rescuing workers, and it should be client-driven' (Interview with Gabby Skelsey, RhED). When asked about good practice, Georgie reflected 'I suppose it's just really – I know it sounds really basic, but it's listening to what the person wants … it's a lot of coordination essentially and just listening to what it is that they want and trying to marry that up with opportunities that are available' (Interview with Georgie). The importance of developing a peer-based, open approach and being person-centred was also raised by Catherine: 'So, we'd have a … fairly open approach to who would be eligible and the criteria of course would be that they have been a sex worker or still are. Then the elements of it I guess would be worked out in partnership, you know, what is it that they're having difficulty with?' (Interview with Catherine Healy, NZPC).

When asked about good practice Michael responded that this involved developing individually tailored programs:

> [good practice is] listening to the person to start with. Really getting down to motivation, what's really going on with their work, and talking them through until they decide what their needs are because quite often it's been a situation or a series of situations or a couple of months of bad money or whatever and they're sometimes making a decision without taking all the factors into account. One of the things as I said before to encourage people is not to rush out of the door straight away without thinking about, you're going to lose a job that's got lots of flexibility, so you're going to have to be prepared for that. You're probably going to take a fairly big drop in income. Maybe you've got yourself set up so that that's not a problem, you know moved out of an expensive house or whatever it is or decided not to buy lots of beautiful high-heeled shoes. Whatever. Because you're not going to make as much definitely and definitely not straight off as you were if you were a sex worker. So tailored programs that are individual and, as I said, we don't have a structure around this area of our work. We do it ad hoc as we go along with each individual, taking into consideration all the pathways and all the things that you could do. (Interview with Michael)

For Ava, being person-centred was shaping the program around the notion of self-determination and giving people the information and space needed to make informed decisions as well as working with someone to help identify the issues leading them to want to make changes in their working life. Ava felt it was equally important that sex workers identified these issues themselves rather than being told this because most sex workers 'feel that they're over being told what their issues are' (Interview with Ava).

Cecilia also considered the need to take a person-centred and empowerment-based approach as part of good practice in service provision:

> I think client centred is first and foremost [good practice] … it's really important to have that consultation and that connection with clients and noticing anything, because there is a lot of assumptions about sex work and the sex industry and that can be quite damaging. I think definitely just an empowering model is really important as well. Just empowering the clients to make their own choices and their own decisions in what they want to do, because it is a choice and it's their choice in the end because it's their life. (Interview with Cecilia)

Ahi raised similar points but also reflected that providing pressure-free services was an essential element of good practice:

> … [good practice] is letting the sex worker lead the process for themselves, so if their wanting to – whatever particular direction they're wanting to go, we don't push them in any direction. So, we sort of support them by letting them know what the options are if they're not sure about what options they've got we can help them with those sorts of things and so there is no pressure from us either way. We want to support all sex workers whether they are wanting to stay in sex work or leave sex work, so that would be a really key component [of good practice]. (Interview with Ahi Wi Hongi, NZPC)

Sarah spoke about the program being client-centred as an absolute necessity and when asked about different sectors, she suggested resisting the temptation to deliver targeted services on a sector basis:

> I think you would be providing different services based on the individual and what they need. One person may need help writing a resume, one person may need help boosting their confidence in job interviews. I think that would vary from sector to sector, so person to person and less based on the sector. (Interview with Sarah)

Person-first and client-driven approaches were seen as a central part of good practice approaches. The reasons for this ranged from the ability this gives to recognise and address different needs and develop individual, tailored responses as well as the flexibility it offers in service provision. No participant endorsed fixed programming or a one-size-fits-all approach. Person-centred approaches were also seen as adhering to the principles of self-determination and autonomy, which are paramount in right-based frameworks, and as Ava noted this gives 'people the right to own their own shit' (Interview with Ava). Another important consideration in adopting a person-centred approach is that it may help to circumvent current orthodoxy in public health approaches to sex work that tend to favour targeting services for sex workers by work sector or location. The flexibility in service provision encouraged by person-centred programming leads into another key theme identified in the interviews, namely the importance of holistic interventions, which we discuss below.

4.2.3 Holistic interventions

Both Ouspenski (2014) and Mayhew and Mossman (2007) understand *holistic interventions* to incorporate a 'big picture' understanding of sex workers lives, thereby addressing diverse needs through engaging with a range of organisations and services. As Ouspenski states, 'addressing the individual along with the social conditions they find themselves in is also key, and should be done as a gold standard when providing services' (2014, p. 49).

When reflecting on her own experiences about making the decision to join a Queensland-based transitioning program, Mandy Bliss said she decided the program wasn't really for her. This was because sex workers were required to sign an agreement stating they would not do sex work anymore. Mandy wasn't so sure about signing this as she felt that the issues may not necessarily have been about the job, and holistic interventions are designed to recognise and address this:

> … with this work as much as any other work, it's not just the work. You might not want to get out because you don't like the work because it might not be the issue. It might be to do with work life balance or burnout or any of those things that affect every single person. (Interview with Mandy Bliss, Respect Inc.)

Holistic interventions are also designed to address individual needs in a structural context. For Ava this means recognising what the issues may be with aspects of the work and finding ways to work that are better for that person and the stage of their lives:

> Night shifts. Night shifts are probably one of the biggest [issues for people having] families. Night work doesn't always work. Weekend work doesn't always work. We've had people who have moved into other areas of the sex industry. I've been involved in this for 25 years. The [thought] of leaving this community hurts. You know, I just don't want to do it. So, it could be people [like the work] and so they may not necessarily want to do full service anymore [but they probably will] stay in the industry. (Interview with Ava)

Holistic programming was also a key feature of good practice discussed by Georgie, and for her this enabled the program to be flexible in responding to a client's needs:

> I don't like the idea of a sliding scale and you fit into a level three support. I think you've got to trust your staff's assessment skills. We don't want to put someone who is coming in as a really high functioning person but just needs a little bit of support or debrief almost sometimes to just give them the confidence to try and talk about the barriers and the changes and the differences in industries. We don't want to take money away from someone who needs dental, needs mental health, needs general health, housing, blah, blah, blah. I think you've got to trust the

> program a little bit too … because if you make it this onerous and arduous assessment process to be able to get someone to a level four, those people stop engaging. You need to make it easy … [for clients] to get in [and] … you have to be flexible. (Interview with Georgie)

As Georgie also reflected, rights-based holistic approaches are a key part of good practice as a central component becomes a rejection of rescue-based approaches and mentalities:

> I think even if you're working with traumatised people, going in with a rescue mentality is not empowering. I think understanding trauma, and I'm not suggesting for a minute that every client you engage with just because they've been in the industry has suffered trauma. But … I think having a trauma lens and understanding that can help. (Interview with Georgie)

Sophia argued against taking a one-size-fits-all approach not only because of the diversity among sex workers but also in meeting their needs, and in addressing these factors holistic approaches are absolutely necessary:

> … [good practice is] about transition and options. It's about understanding that because of the diversity of peoples' situations who are involved in the industry, there's no one size fits all approach or time line. That different people have different needs for what supports them … [it is working] under the social model of health and that very holistic approach. That I think is vital and really important. Because if you can't operate that way, you're fairly limited in what you can offer people who might not need employment services. People who might not need help to write a CV or who might not be homeless, or whatever. (Interview with Sophia)

For Jules, however, holistic interventions were seen in the context of broader programming offered by peer-based organisations:

> I think it's applicable in the context of a holistic suite of programs [that] may be offered through peer sex worker organisations, right. So that's the place that we see of it, in the sense that there will be people that do want to look for other employment. But we do see it as a suite of holistic peer support that sex worker organisations provide. (Interview with Jules Kim, Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association)

In recognising some of the systemic issues with transition programs, Jules went on to argue that it was essential for sex worker organisations to provide transitioning services as part of a holistic suite of programs for sex workers as when non-sex worker organisations provide them, it can be 'a lot more problematic … and quite misinformed' (Interview with Jules Kim, Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association).

Both Ouspenski (2014) and Mayhew and Mossman (2007) discuss transitioning as a non-linear process, noting that sex workers are likely to exit and re-enter the industry multiple times. For Mayhew and Mossman, interventions need to facilitate free choice by allowing clients to 'go down routes which suit them best' (2007, p. 28). This need for flexibility and the idea of 'dual careers' was mentioned by a few participants. For example, Georgie reflected that 'it's about understanding that it's a transition like you continue to stay in the industry to save a certain amount of money, you set up some goals. But then there's also you meet people quite frequently who have just had enough, they're done and that's it' (Interview with Georgie). Amelia saw choice and flexibility as paramount in the development of holistic interventions because:

> … people could undertake the transition programming with us and not do anything with it at all or decide that they're going to do something with it in six years' time or six months' time. There's absolutely going to be no guidelines around that, if you're going to enter into this program it's going to cost us x, y, z and so you have to prove that you're going to transition out of sex work. I mean our lives change. Our thought processes change, our goals change, and somebody might believe one day that that's something they want to do and then their circumstances are [say] the law changes the next day and so that changes the focus. So, that would absolutely be terrible practice to put those sorts of restrictions on people. (Interview with Amelia)

Gabby also reflected on the importance of staying in sex work and providing workers with this choice and flexibility, otherwise the potential exists to cause harm and damage and act as a barrier for people who may want to leave sex work:

> What I'd always say to people who are thinking of leaving the industry, because it's a sort of spur of the moment thing, they want out, I would say to them that it's always useful to keep one foot in the industry and one foot out as you move forward. Because if you say, I'm over it, I just want to you know, get away from everything, you know, I'd just talk about, well, be careful about that, because yeah, it's a great idea, and yes you can go and get a job down the road in the coffee shop, but you're going to miss the money. That's number one, and you're going to miss your lifestyle and what it affords you, and then in two weeks you may find yourself going back and then you'll be hard on yourself because you've gone back. So, it's better to do it slowly. (Interview with Gabby Skelsey, RhED)

Alison also spoke about the importance of programs being flexible and keeping options open and supporting workers to stay engaged in sex work. Holistic programs need to re-think the popular framing of dual careers or a worker moving back into sex work as a failure, instead seeing this as one of the options available to workers:

> I think you should be careful not to discourage workers from re-entering the industry if they want to. You should always make sure that their options are open. For example, a private worker who's spent the last couple of years building their brand – don't recommend to them that they burn it to the ground and delete all of their social media profiles for their persona and give up their domains and so on and so forth. Don't make it a you have to make a clean break kind of thing. This is all about options and one of the options is to return if they want to … Make sure that if they decide that they don't want to leave the industry after all of that then that's okay too, or, if they want to change to a different part of the industry [then that's okay]. (Interview with Alison)

Although these features are not identified as best practice by Ouspenski (2014), perhaps this is because within a model where sex workers are understood as having agency in their negotiation of structural forces, the need for choice and flexibility is a given. Instead, Ouspenski discusses how services must be 'individually tailored to fit specific needs of the client, and be entirely voluntary', take a harm prevention/harm reduction approach, and 'be long-term in nature, inclusive, holistic, and rooted in concepts of social justice and empowerment', and these conclusions are clearly reflected by the participants in this study (2014, p. 48).

4.2.4 Peer-engagement and outreach

Focusing on material produced by or with sex workers, Ouspenski (2014) argues for *sex worker led* interventions and the provision of direct support from *peer workers* as an essential feature of promising practice. However, for some participants, promising practice also included the provision of direct support from a diverse range of peers, thus reflecting on the importance of intersectionality in peer engagement. For example, Ava spoke about how thorough consideration is given to broad and diverse representation, which is also reflected in the organisation's constitution, including diversity in state-based geographical location, gender and sexuality, age, ethnicity and/or migration status (including bi and/or multilingual peers) (Interview with Ava). Similarly, Michael also spoke about the importance of having diversity among peers for understanding the different levels or complex layers of sex workers' experiences, and that while peers may have a shared experience of working in the sex industry, they may not necessarily be able to relate to and understand the complexities and intricacies of each other's lives:

> … sex work peers, then you get in to different types of sex work, et cetera, et cetera. So we do try if somebody comes in for counselling or any sort of advice, we do try and match them with somebody who's worked in the same part of the industry, that has experience there. So it could have been a stripper … you could have been a male officer for the guys that sex work. We have people who identify as trans. We have Thai speakers, Korean speakers and Chinese speakers. So those people can speak in language and, if possible – it's not unusual, somebody will be talking to somebody in one of the counselling rooms and they'll go out and bring

> somebody else in because they'll say to the person, look you're now talking to me about your injecting drug use. Okay, would you like to talk to a peer in that? … an injecting drug user will come in and go, yeah, I know what it's like to wake up [after crystal] and get into a mess. So we try really to match people on a lot of levels. We have an Aboriginal officer as well who can sit down face-to-face with Indigenous people much better than I can … [so we] match that peer on more than just the sex worker level. (Interview with Michael)

Ideally, as we discussed in section 4.2.1 some participants reflected that services be provided through peer-based organisations, with this being best practice for many participants. However, as Ouspenski (2014) suggests this is not always feasible and it is impractical to suggest that established non-peer organisations stop providing services or disband. Moreover, as Catriona suggests sex worker allies can have crucial roles in transitioning:

> I think when you adopt peer-based approaches, it's really important not to minimise the role that non-peers in an organisation can play in the movement as well. It's around other movements, as well – LGBTI communities and allies. That's a really important message to deliver, and I think some of the greatest harms caused to communities are through that internal struggle and that notion of non-peer versus peer and what kind of positive work can you do in the space? It's literally just around being there and providing support and being a part of the cause and just allowing opportunities [and] recognising that you aren't the driver of change – that the driver of change should be from within the community – but you can help to facilitate that. (Interview with Catriona Hodgson, RhED)

Additionally, non-peer organisations can take steps to ensure that sex workers are engaged and appropriately represented throughout the structure of their organisation. In order to ensure peers are appropriately engaged in service provision organisations, Ouspenski suggests organisations establish policies that 'guarantee a percentage of experiential board and staff members' (2014, p. 49). Rachel Reilly suggested that organisations develop advisory committees, bodies or groups as a mechanism through which peers can be involved in program design and monitoring (Interview with Rachel Reilly, Project Respect). In addition to hiring peers as case workers, and employing community-based approaches, organisations can develop professional development programs for peers, who can then take on a different range of roles within the organisation (Interview with Rachel Reilly, Project Respect). On the issue of employing peers, Cecilia noted that some jobs in the sector:

> … are not really that conducive to someone that's still working in the industry, for example, looking at maybe doing something else alongside or exploring different options or different career paths or whatever. So, if you're advertising for a nine to five full time job and someone is working in the sex industry that's not going to be very easy for them unless someone wants to work 24 hours a day which no-one really does. (Interview with Cecilia)

In addition to hiring peers as staff, Cecilia also spoke about the possibility of offering volunteering opportunities and internships as a way to increase peer engagement and involvement in programs (Interview with Cecilia).

Outreach was also identified as an important component of promising practice in peer engagement in the literature. Outreach removes some of the barriers sex workers face in accessing services by bringing the services to them. Lexxie shared this view:

> I think it's about letting workers know also that we're there if they want us. I think one of the problems with the exiting programs is that they're kind of shoved in your face. Whereas I don't think – a sex worker org doesn't do that kind of thing. We're – the presence is there, if you want it you come to us and then we will help with whatever we can and however we can. But we don't tend to push ourselves and – so it's about not being pushy. (Interview with Lexxie Jury, SWOP ACT)

According to Ouspenski (2014), an increasingly important component of outreach is netreach. Sex workers have moved to online spaces to advertise and negotiate their provision of services and having a strong online presence is an essential part of engaging in outreach with sex worker

communities. This issue was raised by Michael, who discussed changes not only in outreach but also the provision of sexual services over twenty years of providing outreach:

> … because the guys were the first to sort of really embrace the Internet experience and move out of sex service premises and definitely off the streets. It killed street-based work here for male workers. So, we get to follow them where they went. Once upon a time you put on a backpack full of condoms and resources and you walked down [location removed] and then down [location removed] and you managed to hand stuff out to almost everybody that was working, but they're not there anymore. So, we walk down the virtual street, handing out our resources and it's not quite the same because when people are on the street you can sort of bail them up against the nearest lamp-post or whatever. But they can avoid you a lot more easily on the Internet. We get a sort of lower response rate. It's taken us about four years to build up our Facebook and the Twitter followings and to get them to be self-sustaining. So now, people make comments and make comments back and forth to each other; whereas once it was just – we started off we put stuff up, nothing, a few likes, then more likes and then the occasional comment. Now we really have debates and stuff going. That's peer education … Because exchanging information and we just put in the sort of main health-based stuff and then they debate it out for themselves. (Interview with Michael)

Alison also saw online spaces as critical for engaging with sex workers, with netreach offering workers more convenient ways to access services and information in line with working practices:

> But these online spaces – this is where they're engaging. Sometimes there's, for example, there's a lot of workers who will have their own private group, where the girls hang out and the management can't see what they're saying online. You see different sectors of the industry have their own private forums. Traveling workers communicate with each other about working conditions and studios and hotels. There's so much possibility. Quite a lot of workers like text only type spaces, like forums and stuff. Others like more interactive instant messaging or even video chat. Discord is something that has come up recently as a way that workers online, like cammers, are networking a lot. I think it's been that way for quite a while. I was heavily involved with a number of sex worker spaces online a decade ago, but now it's not necessary for workers to have access to a big site that's giving them a space, they can create their own spaces all over the place. I think workers are used to that and it's more convenient. Convenience is a really big problem for sex workers. (Interview with Alison)

4.2.5 Multi-agency partnerships

Ouspenski identifies the need for multi-agency partnerships, stating:

> Collaborating between agencies (both NGOs and governmental) was identified as the number one key approach to offering transitioning option[s] to sex workers. While collaboration between sex work agencies is considered best practice, it must be expanded further to create formal (i.e., written in policy) and long-term ties, referral systems, low-threshold access, and [an] umbrella-structure that allow[s] for coordinated and integrated responses with other NGOs and social service agencies. (2014, p. 48)

For Georgie good practice was about having linkages, and this was particularly important for people that might not be suited to job network agencies, or for those who are accessing Centerlink, providing assistance with Centrelink could be of value but the key part of partnerships was maintaining confidentiality (Interview with Georgie). Tight confidentiality processes were also a key component of good practice for Jules as well as memorandums of understanding (MoUs), confidentiality agreements and controls over the individuals who can access information about sex workers who may be accessing the program (Interview with Jules Kim, Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association).

Amelia saw multiple partnerships as a necessary part of good practices and providing a broad range of holistic services designed to meet the diverse needs of workers:

> … [good practice is] definitely some structured service link-ins with other services. Not, oh let's give these guys a ring and see if they can help. Where we actually have those networks already set up and we're working collaboratively with recruitment agencies et cetera. If somebody's got co-morbidity issues, it's not just about sex work, there may be drug addiction or things like that, dealing with those sorts of things as well because they're all barriers. Often people will engage in sex work because they fit around these other social and life barriers that they've got going on. So, you need to assess that as well and does the sex worker want assistance in addressing these issues as well if they exist, because that has to be considered. (Interview with Amelia)

Jane, however, spoke about the issues sex workers may face when accessing job service agencies or other service providers, which indicates the need to be selective about partnering agencies as well as the centrality of providing de-stigmatisation and awareness training:

> When we've looked at things like employment agencies, like job centres [there is both accessibility issues and discrimination against sex workers]. It's access to employment agencies and being able to refer people to somewhere that's not discriminatory but also there's been massive issues that people have had with the fact that government funding now goes to employment agencies that are run by the Salvos for example, that are highly discriminatory. We've had to provide peer support to workers that have ended up having to go to government funded employment services that are massively discriminatory and hold – because they're religious organisations that run those agencies now – that hold very negative views of our community. (Interview with Jane Green, Vixen Collective)

When developing relationships with organisations, participants also spoke of the need to make sure that organisations are sex worker friendly and appropriate working partnerships are developed. These issues are discussed in more depth in the accompanying Evidence Review Report, including a detailed case study of Vancouver's Transitions Consortium, which is a program based on multi-agency partnerships (see Sandy, Meenagh, & Nes-Iadicola, 2019).

4.2.6 Continuous improvement

During consultations, participants reflected on promising practice as feeding into evaluation processes and ongoing program design. For some participants, an essential feature of continuous improvement was ongoing consultation with sex workers, starting from the inception of a program or service: 'it's about consulting with community and providing a range of services based on what community tells us their needs are' (Interview with Jane Green, Vixen Collective).

Cecilia also argued that community consultation should be at the heart of all programs and services, not just sometimes but at all times, and emphasised the need for consultation to be ongoing and formalised (Interview with Cecilia). For Cecilia, this was the cornerstone of continuous practice and improvement in service delivery. Jane also spoke about the importance of ongoing consultation in recognition that community needs will change with time and are not static:

> … when you're talking about the idea of providing services to our community nothing that we need is static. It should always be about consulting our community and finding out what those needs are and consulting our community is a thing that you have to do all the time. It's not something that you should be (a) doing on the basis of assumptions or (b) doing once and then just doing that thing forever. (Interview with Jane Green, Vixen Collective)

Jules saw the importance of programs being 'flexible and responsive to needs' and as part of this suggested the need for a 'strong process and evaluation process that feeds into a kind of quality control, a continuous improvement mechanism, which is I think going to be a crucial aspect of any sort of program of this type', thus making the link between continuous improvement, program evaluation and redesign in order to meet sex workers' needs (Interview with Jules Kim, Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association).

4.2.7 Transparency, equity in access and boundary management

According to Gabby, one of the essential features of promising practice was absolute transparency in the information provided about the program and the services being offered, appropriate staff in key roles as well as dedicated support for program staff:

> … being firm with what can be done and what can't be done. Very clear with boundaries … [you] have to have really good boundaries and management of it, and good support, dedicated support to the workers [like]..... mandatory debriefing … really good debriefing – someone who can push when they think there's something going on. Someone who can hear what's going on, without getting panicked by it, and someone who obviously is not going to judge and not discriminate against the person if they're struggling. It's all about supporting the worker. You know, the person, who's done sex work, and the role that they are now in. (Interview with Gabby Skelsey, RhED)

As Gabby highlights, it is essential for program staff to understand the experiences of those who do sex work as work. In addition, effective management support for program staff is essential. For Gabby, as a 'boundary driven worker', having very clear boundaries that are maintained ensures transparency and equity – all key features of what Gabby defines as promising practice. However, Gabby also highlighted that sex workers need to maintain these boundaries as well.

Jules also considered peer training and support as crucial in good practice:

> It is also really important that actually the peer educator is given appropriate training and support. I think a large part of that might be about just having those conversations with whether it be education providers or job service providers, to find those ones that are sex worker-friendly that you can work with and build a relationship with and build a pathway with. (Interview with Jules Kim, Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association)

A key consideration for Amelia was not only the provision of training for peer workers, but that it be of a high quality and appropriate for providing training for other workers who may take part in programs:

> I think the training and education that's given to the trainers has to be absolute gold standard as well. It can't be somebody just flying by the seat of their pants and talking about their – for me for instance. Alright, let's talk about me. I was working as a sex worker fulltime, then I went and did study and then I ended up in this position. It can't be me just saying, well this is my experience and so you have to do it the same way … I would have had to have gone through appropriate training to be able to deliver that training to sex workers. (Interview with Amelia)

Alongside this are *practical considerations* service providers need to take into account when engaging with sex workers, such as ensuring services are provided at times that are accessible to sex workers. Similar to workers in many industries, sex workers find it difficult to access services that are only provided Monday to Friday from 9-5 (Ouspenski, 2014). Another barrier identified in the literature is access to services being contingent upon following strict rules, and the use of punitive measures for missed appointments (Ouspenski, 2014). *Location of services* can be another barrier, and both Mayhew and Mossman (2007) and Ouspenski (2014) suggest services being located near – but away from – the places sex workers work. In determining where service provision should occur, it is arguably best to consult with the sex workers who will be accessing these services to ensure it appropriately meets their needs. Some additional practical considerations for service providers are: providing on-site child care; engaging appropriate and non-judgemental translating services; ensuring residency status and financial status are not barriers to accessing services; and ensuring the confidentiality and anonymity of service users (Ouspenski, 2014). Finally, picking up on the theme of continuous improvement, Ouspenski (2014) argues for regular evaluation of services for sex workers, by sex workers.

Another feature of promising practice for transitioning programs identified in these reports is the provision of *adequate resources*. Mayhew and Mossman (2007) speak to the importance of services being adequately resourced to ensure that appropriate services are available, and for continuity of care. Similarly, Ouspenski (2014) notes that ongoing and long-term funding is an essential

component of best practice. Additionally, this funding should 'go directly to sex worker organizations and communities, which can then choose to employ their own staff (including nurses, doctors, and social workers), and be able to direct the delivery and content of services in a manner that is appropriate for them' (Ouspenski, 2014, p. 53). Ouspenski (2014) concludes with a discussion of the importance of sex worker movements aligning themselves with the advocacy of other marginalised groups, and vice versa, a point we raised earlier. The importance of appropriate and non-tokenistic representation cannot be overstated, nor can the importance of community collaborations. Sex workers are not the only population to have complex needs that can require specialised services; a general focus on making services more accessible to marginalised groups will benefit sex workers, and particularly those who are most difficult to reach.

4.2.8 Stigma and discrimination

One of the biggest challenges to working in and/or leaving the sex industry identified in the literature is the stigma that sex workers face. Stigmatisation of sex work affects former sex workers and can contribute to their re-entry into the sex industry (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007). Both Ouspenski (2014) and Mayhew and Mossman (2007) discuss the need for *awareness raising/public education* as part of promising practice for transitioning programs. Again, Mayhew and Mossman (2007) identify this in terms of a rehabilitation framework, focusing on the need to produce sympathy for sex workers within the community and raise awareness of transitioning (i.e. exiting) services. Contrary to this, Ouspenski (2014) takes a rights-based approach, pointing to the need for education that addresses stigma through legitimising sex work as work. The stigma surrounding sex work is arguably the biggest barrier that sex workers face in accessing services and transitioning into other fields of employment (Mayhew & Mossman, 2007; Ouspenski, 2014). As Gabby reflected, transitioning programs may be necessary because of the stigma and discrimination that sex workers face, which means it becomes challenging for workers to find a safe 'space where they can talk about what's going on for them' (Interview with Gabby Skelsey, RhED). This view was shared by Lisa who commented that workers hide their sex work experience on their CVs for a purpose, with the key reason being the stigma and discrimination many face. She went on to say:

> I've worked in adult education for years. Anything that's about job retraining or adult education is – I think is necessary. But whether it's really necessary in sex work compared to other professions or other types of work. I mean I guess so, you're dealing with so much more stigma and you're dealing with so many more barriers. (Interview with Lisa)

Similarly, Sarah reflected that:

> If people do want to change careers or move out of the sex industry, I don't think it's that they don't have the skills, or they can't go and apply for a job or write their resume. Usually it's the stigma and discrimination of the other outside community that prevents them from putting sex work on their resume or feeling confident enough to apply for other jobs and things like that. So, I think, yeah, if people want to exit, I think more resources would be better spent doing community education. (Interview with Sarah)

Sarah went on to share her experiences when trying to recruit for a position within their organisation, which demonstrates some of the micro and macro factors transitioning programs need to address:

> We recently advertised for a position and it was – we put that sex work experience was desirable, but we didn't put it as essential. I noticed all the non-sex workers who applied were so much more confident in their ability and talking themselves up. All the sex workers who applied, who were fairly easily matched on skills, qualifications, everything, were so much less likely to imagine that they would get the job or be considered for a role and things like that. That confidence goes a long way in job seeking. That's not because they're not skilled, it's because they have this perception that others won't think that they're skilled enough. (Interview with Sarah)

In addition, providing awareness training to service providers (including health, legal, educational service providers) will help make these services more accessible to sex workers. As Ouspenski states, 'training service providers (by sex workers) to ensure non-discriminatory, non-judgemental

and sensitive attitudes to the experiences of sex workers is necessary for improved access to services' (2014, p. 51) Related to this, perhaps another way non-peer based organisations can bolster peer involvement is through helping to legitimate peer organisations on a broader societal level: 'sex worker organizations must be respected as partners by not only other NGOs but by larger systems of power, such as governmental social and health services and law enforcement' (Ouspenski, 2014, p. 50).

It remains to be said that, while stigma and discrimination may be one of the key reasons why transitioning programs could be considered necessary, it is precisely because of the stigma surrounding sex work that sex workers face serious and significant barriers in finding work. For example, Jane discussed the entrenched stigma and discrimination faced by sex workers:

> Most commonly what sex workers have been telling us is they need assistance around working to address issues like gaps in CVs. I think looking at that from the point of view that that's come up with us there's two sides to that. One is the very functional, what do I stick in my resume side of that. But the other side of that is advocacy around we should actually be able to list sex work in our [resume] because sex work is skilled labour that should be recognised. (Interview with Jane Green, Vixen Collective)

There is an argument to be made that an essential feature of promising practice in transitioning is tackling and confronting the stigma surrounding sex work and the discrimination sex workers face at the micro and macro levels. However, as Lexxie noted, transitioning programs need to be careful that they do not end up perpetuating stigma:

> I guess that's where my dislike of exiting, transition, like there's no other job in the world that has an exiting or transitioning position … [as an] outreach worker, no one's offering me a transitioning job, no one's offering me an exiting job. As a bank teller, as a cop, as a lawyer, as anything, nobody else is being offered that. You get offered upskilling, I guess, that kind of thing … but there's no – that doesn't happen kind of anywhere else. It's only as a sex worker that we're going to offer you a transitioning or an exiting program. (Interview with Lexxie Jury, SWOP ACT)

Gabby also reflected that:

> … if you're a hair dresser, or you've worked at Price Waterhouse as a graduate and you're burnt out after ten years, you don't have a service that comes along and supports you. The argument is, well we have one because of stigma and discrimination, but I'm not too sure you actually need a whole program for that … you need some good information and education and support, talking about what it is you want to do … [transitioning programs] it's what the government love, government loves things like that. (Interview with Gabby Skelsey, RhED)

There is an argument to be made that promising practice in the provision of transitioning services involves a move away from transitioning (and 'exiting') specific programs in favour of more generalised sex worker services, where transitioning assistance is one component available and this needs to be based on a need identified by sex workers themselves.

4.3 Summary

The features of best practice in transitioning programs are clear from both the literature and the stakeholder interviews. A framing that seeks to 'exit' workers from sex work is paternalistic and delegitimises sex work as work, thereby contributing to the stigma and discrimination that creates barriers for sex workers who want to transition in sex work or to other forms of employment. To avoid this, these programs need to be sex worker-led, developed and implemented from the bottom-up, have an intersectional lens, and utilise a resilience-based model that allows for duality. Central to best practice is a framing of sex work as not only work, but skilled work that carries with it a suite of transferrable skills. Such a program is not limited by providing support for sex workers to leave the industry but provides support for sex workers to transition and develop their careers within the industry as well. It is based upon the needs and desires of the individual through a person-first, client-driven approach. In recognising the duality within sex workers lives, a best practice program offers

choice and flexibility and looks at ways that sex workers can find balance within their lives – be that through upskilling in sex work, a change in their sex work practices, finding a second 'square' job, or transitioning out of the industry.

Essential to best practice in transitioning programs is a sex worker-led approach. Given the controversy that surrounds transitioning, and the stigma that surrounds sex work, services that are informed by lived experience of sex work are invaluable. Sex workers should be represented in all aspects of the program ranging from program management, to the steering committee and delivering front-facing services. That said, the program must still adhere to the tenants discussed above. Sex workers are not immune from whorephobia, and sex workers involved in delivering these services must also engage in a non-stigmatising approach. Peer training is an important feature in ensuring sex workers have the appropriate skills to be delivering services in a non-stigmatising way. It is also important that sex workers know about the services that are available to them, and this can be accomplished through engaging in outreach and netreach.

Transitioning programs need to take a multi-pronged approach. Holistic interventions that are located within a broader provision of services to sex workers is preferential to a transitioning specific program. Additionally, in taking a person-first approach these services must not make assumptions of needs based on sectors of sex work. Engaging peers with diverse experience is another important feature of best practice. Sex work and sex workers are diverse; having that diversity reflected through the peers involved in service delivery helps to break down barriers and build positive relationships with community. In order to accomplish this, it is important that there be flexibility in how peers are involved in service delivery. Hiring practices must be able to accommodate the hiring of sex workers who may still be engaged in sex work. Sex worker allies can also play important roles within transitioning services, but this should be in the form of support roles instead of leadership roles. Within the provision of transitioning services, it is important that there be transparency, equity in access, and good boundary management all around.

Finally, best practice transitioning services should be working to address the stigma and discrimination sex workers face at a structural level and be actively engaged in improvement of services. Combating stigma and discrimination can be accomplished through training programs and building relationships with organisations and agencies who work with sex workers in various capacities (e.g. health and social services, job service networks, accountants, educational institutions). Regularly conducting community consultations and sex worker-led program evaluations will help to ensure the continued improvement of service delivery.

5 Promising practices checklist (for program evaluation and ongoing development)

The development work for this checklist is based on a synthesis of interview data from the stakeholder consultations combined with the work of Fazal and colleagues (2017) in developing Canada's Best Practice Portal, the Canadian Homelessness Research Network's research on designing and implementing promising practices research (CHRN, 2013), UNAIDS work on best practice approaches towards sex work (UNAIDS, 2012), WHO guidelines on comprehensive HIV/STI programs with sex workers (WHO, 2013), the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2017), Soriano, Clark and Wise's (2008) work on promising practice profiles developed for the Australian Institute of Family Studies, Ouspenski's (2014) research into good practice in transitioning services in Vancouver, Canada and the UK Network of Sex Work Projects good guidance note on transitioning programs (UK NSWP, 2008) as well as desk-based research reported on elsewhere (see Sandy, Meenagh, & Nes-Iadicola, 2019). When determining if a practice is promising, it is vitally important to note that the intervention needs to be 'driven by a demonstrated need, have clearly defined goals and objectives that align with the mission and values of the practice and have a strong theoretical justification for why it may work' (CHRN, 2013, p. 8). Thus, it is essential that a promising practice can demonstrate both the evidence that makes the case for the practice and how research supports the course of action.

The criteria listed in the promising practices checklist have been developed from a human rights perspective, and all the criteria have to be met to some degree. This means that, at a minimum, practice should not undermine or contradict any of the criteria listed below. It should also be noted that, with this checklist, it has been designed to enable criteria testing as an ongoing process: the criteria can prove their relevance as stakeholders and target populations suggest examples of promising practices (e.g. if an evaluation working party is established, the checklist can be expanded – it can be treated as a 'living document').

Scoring criteria for program/content analysis

2=Yes (Fully): The program sufficiently addresses the element
1=Partially: The program partially addresses the element
0=No: The program does not address the element

Promising Practices Catalogue/Checklist/Evaluation tool

Promising Practice Criteria	Yes	No	Partially	Uncertain/Notes
The Framework (design of the practice)[7]				
The program is theory based				
The program is based on guidelines, protocols, standards and services that are proven to lead to effective outcomes				
The program is based on a clear and strong guiding vision and framework				
There is a clear evidence base or evidentiary basis for the program				
The program has a mission, goals and objectives that are clear and obtainable				
Practices are in alignment with the mission, goals and objectives of the program				
The program is driven by a demonstrated need (need assessment has been carried out)				
The program has regular (ongoing) needs assessment				

[7] An essential feature of promising practice is that a clear and convincing case has been established for undertaking the practice: there is a clear evidence base for the program.

Outcomes and quality improvement (continuous improvement)				
The program incorporates lessons learned, feedback and analysis to lead toward improvements or positive outcomes				
An evaluation plan is in place to measure program outcomes				
Evaluation plans include independent evaluation research				
Sex workers are able to participate in monitoring and evaluation (and as part of ensuring accountability)				
Responses to feedback are provided to sex workers				
Sex workers have access and can contribute to ongoing program design, development and implementation				
Quality assurance measures include mechanisms for ongoing feedback and complaints				
Client feedback on quality of the program and outcomes is collected				
Feedback from other stakeholders and collaborating agencies on quality of the program and outcomes is collected				
Feedback is fed into program changes and continuous improvements				
The program undertakes broad consultation and regular needs assessments to ensure topics and issues remain relevant and the program continues to meet the needs of new participants				
Peer-driven (sex worker led)[8]				
The program has effective engagement with, and inclusion of, sex workers				
Sex workers are represented in key monitoring and oversight bodies (e.g. program boards, steering committees etc.)				
The program features sex worker-driven planning and decision-making processes				
Sex workers are included in program planning and implementation				
The program includes provision of direct support from peer workers				
Client-centred and non-discriminatory[9]				
The model of service is participant-driven				
The program and model of service empowers participants through: • Self-esteem building • Involvement in planning and decision-making				

[8] The importance of sex workers' input and direct involvement cannot be underestimated, especially in transitioning programs and services where more commonly their voices are not centred in research and programs. Active, free and meaningful participation by sex workers is an essential feature of best practice in providing services to sex workers (UNAIDS, 2012; WHO, 2013). This means that planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation must be participatory and allow genuine opportunities for sex workers to freely express demands and concerns and influence decisions. It is critical to include representatives of all concerned individuals, groups and communities in participatory processes.

[9] A client-centred approach is defined as one where the service user plays a major role in defining their pathway, fully participates in decision-making, is presented with options and treated with respect at all times (CHRN, 2013, p. 10).

Participants are assessed in terms of level of awareness, risk and resilience and matched with an appropriate level of support				
The program adopts a case management approach (where necessary)				
The program has an effective process for complaints				
The program employs a combination of individual and group work				
The program provides an appropriate timeframe of support				
The program adopts a strengths-based approach				
Combination of universal and targeted program				
Service model that incorporates outreach and netreach				
A formal anti-discrimination policy is in place				
Staff are provided with anti-discrimination training and are committed to anti-discrimination policy				
The program and activities are offered in spaces that are easily accessible and in environments that are safer spaces for sex workers (e.g. non-stigmatising and non-judgemental)				
Non-discrimination based on type of sex work, race, gender, age, language, sexuality, mental or physical ability, religion or health status				
Holistic intervention				
Participants have choice and flexibility (program not regimented/highly structured)				
Participants are not forced to 'exit' sex work				
Participation in the program is voluntary				
The program has a non-exclusive focus (i.e. is not narrowly focused on 'exiting')				
The program offers a diverse range of services and activities that respond to sex workers' needs				
Program uses diverse modalities to deliver services				
Multi-agency partnerships[10]				
Coordinated and integrated responses with other service providers				
Referral protocols are established and followed				
Collaborating agencies are non-discriminatory				
The program has a defined role in relation to other agencies and services				
Quality assurance measures are in place to ensure that participants move through the system in an effective way and their needs are being met				

[10] In order to meet the diversity and complexity of sex workers' needs the program needs strong program collaboration, case management support and appropriate referral. The program does not need to try and offer every kind or type of service to sex workers. Instead, it can focus on specific issues in which they have expertise and for which services are not available elsewhere and work collaboratively with agencies that provide other services (CHRN, 2013, p. 15). Strong multi-agency partnerships are also crucial in addressing stigma and discrimination sex workers may face when accessing mainstream services and challenging stigma to produce social change.

The program is effective in forging and developing multiple partnerships and collaborations with other local community services				
The program has a process for referring participants to other services to ensure they can access all the services they need				
The program undertakes ongoing education, training and awareness raising with collaborating agencies to reduce stigma and discrimination participants may face when accessing services				
Address stigma and discrimination				
The program plays a leading role in legitimising sex work as work				
The program undertakes effective awareness raising and public education with collaborating partners				
The program undertakes effective awareness raising and public education with mainstream industries, workplaces and educational institutions				
The program plays a leading role in the decriminalisation of sex work				
Resources				
The program has adequate sources of funding				
The program has an organisation structure and staffing model that supports implementation				
Supervision, staffing and professional development and support that ensures program effectiveness and commitment to the mission and goals of the program				
Staff are appropriately skilled and qualified				
The program supports capacity building for peers				
Community inclusion/peer engagement				
The program design reflects the needs of sex workers				
The program fills a gap in services for sex workers				
The program employs, and is based on, peer learning				
Participants are matched with staff/volunteers of a similar background (e.g. type of sex work, gender, race, ethnicity, age etc.)				

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