



# Annual Report

2016-17

Sex Workers Outreach Project Inc.



## **ACTING PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

SWOP's key achievement this year was achieving ASES accreditation. This extensive process required the whole organisation, including the Executive Committee, to focus upon ensuring the organisation employs best practice in everything that we do. It's an achievement made all the more remarkable when you consider it comes immediately after organisational independence in July 2014.

The bulk of the organisation's time and team are focused directly upon peer outreach and support serving NSW sex workers. SWOP has also continued to work to change perceptions of sex work and those working as sex workers in the broader community. We do this by providing sex worker sensitivity training and working collaboratively with other organisations, for example, NSW Police.

The SWOP Chief Executive Officer has been very successful in ensuring SWOP has a seat on high level strategy meetings in the blood-borne virus sector, which is essential for raising awareness of the issues facing sex workers and our continued status as preferred provider of health promotion services within the sector.

With strategic input from this Committee, the organisation also responded to a number of Government inquiries that dealt with issues affecting sex workers – making for a very busy year!

*Lizzie*



## CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

SWOP had a very successful year, meeting our strategic goals, and fulfilling our contractual obligations. A budget surplus was achieved due to increases in our sales of bulk condoms and safe sex items.

SWOP responded well to the challenges of the year and the shifting landscape of HIV, STI and BBV prevention, as well as to changes in policy with regard to planning compliance and workplace health and safety.

We continue to sit on key high level research and policy committees as well as a range of local area grass roots committees relevant to sex workers in NSW. In addition we present a consistent and regular voice in mainstream media. Our social media impact continues to be high. We have also overhauled The Professional, and are in the process of adding it to our new look website, which forms our major resource repository and information portal.

SWOP is well positioned for the challenges of the year ahead, which we feel will present great opportunities for us to move towards our strategic goals.

*Cameron*

## Ensure optimum health, safety and human

SWOP's service delivery to NSW sex workers in 2016-17 included 526 sex services premises visits, and 4,851 significant interactions with sex industry workers. This included 2565 parlour/massage workers; 1482 private/escort workers; 338 street-based workers and 160 strip club workers. We also provided support to 533 new or inexperienced sex workers; and began outreaching to sex workers inside NSW prisons.

The SWOP outreach team made 53 outreach visits to rural/regional areas, and improved our culturally

and linguistically diverse (CALD) outreach to regional/rural areas by 36% compared with last year. This included regular Thai and Chinese outreach to the Illawarra, Hunter and Central Coast regions, and a new Chinese Mid North Coast outreach.

Across the year SWOP distributed 221,604 free safer sex items; and 3888 units of safer injecting equipment. We produced 10 new resources, including 5 CALD resources and 4 editions of The Professional magazine, which was revitalised by our new Resource Officer. In total SWOP distributed



# ONE: rights for all New South Wales sex workers

36,470 printed resources (up 114% on 2015-16), with a further 2739 resources downloaded from our website. Our website (relaunched in October 2017) remained steady with just under 80,000 unique visitors. SWOP's social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter continued apace, reaching 2.5 million people. We began outreaching to Chinese sex workers using WeChat, and continued our regular communication with private sex workers via our e-lists. We ran 18 workshops for sex workers including: Private Work 101, Migrant

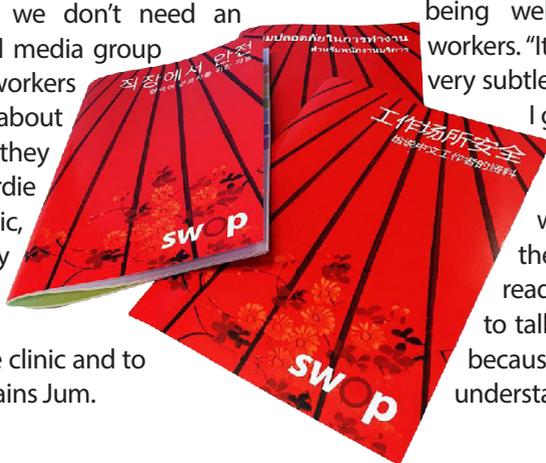
Sex Work in NSW, Sex Toy Care, Arse Class, Law Talk, Self Defence, Self-Care, and multiple Thai and Chinese language workshops on HIV, Hep A+B and Chlamydia. SWOP ran 2 forums and 5 other events, including a morning tea and a Red Umbrella Rally (in collaboration with Scarlet Alliance) for International Whores Day, and 3 events as part of our new monthly SWOP Social program. We also had a presence at other key community events including Yabun Festival, Knockout Festival, NAIDOC, and World AIDS Day.



## Jum and Birdie: Thai Project

**“Thai workers know about the clinic, they know Birdie at the clinic, and they tell other workers to come to the clinic and to SWOP”**

With two members, the key strength of SWOP’s Thai Project is strong collaboration, both internally within our team, in our partnerships, with sexual health clinics and other state-based sex worker organisations, and in our cut through to Thai sex workers. Crossover at one sexual health clinic has created a strong pathway to connect Thai workers with sexual health and support. “When we go to massage shop we say clinic first, then when they go there and see Birdie, she send them to SWOP for support and free condoms. That’s why we don’t need an active social media group – Thai workers know about the clinic, they know Birdie at the clinic, and they tell other workers to come to the clinic and to SWOP,” explains Jum.



In response to requests by Thai sex workers who attended Sex Work 101 last year, hepatitis B was a focus for the Thai team’s workshops this year. Our new Safe at Work suite of booklets won a Multicultural Health Communications Award, and are being well-received by Thai sex workers. “It doesn’t say ‘sex work’, it’s very subtle,” explained Birdie. “When I give Safe at Work to them, I say: don’t throw away! You can share with a new worker, even if I never meet them. Good for new one to read when you have no-one to talk with. The workers like it because it’s simple and easy to understand,” adds Jum.

## Matt: Male Outreach



"It is difficult for guys to come into the office for many reasons, so I try and have as much information online as possible. Because it's online, you don't have that immediate connection with people. You may give info. to someone, and they may use it, but you don't always get a response," says Matt, explaining the perils of online outreach. "Even the MaleOut – posting out condoms – is not just about condoms, it's a reminder that SWOP supports them and is around when they need it." To this end, the feedback that Matt receives when male workers do visit SWOP or attend one of our workshops or SWOP Social events, about what was useful from our last newsletter, is invaluable.

Across the year Matt has grown the SWOPmale e-list, and increased SWOP's presence on online websites and apps

that male sex workers frequent. He has also run a number of successful health campaigns across the SWOPmale branded social media accounts. Matt has supplemented his online work by joining The Professional's editorial committee: "so there's a bit of synergy between that and our health campaign material."

A monthly drop-in at Clinic 180 gives Matt an opportunity to "meet sex workers without them coming into the office." Matt is currently working on another face-to-face initiative with our Community Officer to create a safe space where sex workers can talk openly about alcohol and other drugs. As Matt explains, this comes in response to sex workers reporting that when they visit AOD services, "sex work is automatically seen as the reason they're experiencing problematic AOD."

**"Even the MaleOut – posting out condoms – is not just about condoms, it's a reminder that SWOP supports them and is around when they need it."**

## Goal One

### Natalia: Private Outreach

“The most significant element of private outreach is to help reduce the isolation many private workers feel,” said Natalia, who is proud of the “strong feeling of trust” she gets from the private workers who invite SWOP into their home workplaces. These outreach visits often represent the private worker’s only opportunity to have a totally uninhibited conversation about sex work. Much of Natalia’s metropolitan outreach occurs on the city’s fringes, to workers who live and work “very far out, and can’t get to SWOP during office hours,” she explains. Last year this was supplemented by regional outreaches to Wollongong

and the Central Coast. “The workers there are really appreciative. It’s even lonelier for them in smaller towns they’re really isolated,” said Natalia.

Natalia’s work also includes assisting newly arrived migrant sex workers, often European, who, despite working in their home country, arrive “really in the dark about how to work here,” explains Natalia. This work includes linking these sex workers to appropriate services, explaining where to get a sexual health check, and negotiating safety with Australian clients. “From what I’ve heard, the Aussie clients tend to be more pushy about unprotected services, so it’s been good to educate them on how to initiate safe sex practice more subtly, like by putting a condom on with your mouth,” said Natalia. These interactions also include work options and social needs, including connection to other sex workers.

Natalia consolidated her work reducing the isolation of private and recently arrived workers by tripling the number of subscribers on SWOP’s Private Worker e-list, and through contributing to SWOP Social events that allow workers to socialise with each other in a relaxed environment. “I’ve definitely seen some friendships unfold, and workers reunite and catch up,” said Natalia.



## Maggie: Counselling

“A lot of my work is about linking sex workers to mainstream services, especially to mental health providers. I’ve noticed that now more sex workers will see someone in private practice – Medicare mental health plans have made such a difference. I think negative assumptions about sex workers have generally lessened but there are still some barriers to access and equity. When referring or advocating for individual sex workers I describe sex work in a normalising way” said Maggie.

“One of the aspects in assessment is the person’s support network. So often I hear of isolation so I quite intentionally have conversations around peer engagement and support,” explains

Maggie. Crisis counselling and assisting the wider SWOP team when sex workers with multiple needs and issues contact us, is another important aspect of her work. Being a small organisation, the counsellor does the needs assessments and referrals, as well as providing counselling and some ongoing support. Our counsellor and multicultural team work closely together in supporting and referring workers who often have an array of service needs. Expanding SWOP’s referral list to appropriate services in an ongoing need, but time can be a barrier.

Over the past year the counsellor accessed three months of her leave entitlements in short blocks, to limit service disruption.



## Goal One:

### Ensure optimum health, safety & human rights for all NSW sex workers

- Sustain continued low rates of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including viral hepatitis, within the New South Wales (NSW) sex industry
- Sustain the virtual elimination of HIV transmission within the NSW sex industry
- Counter social exclusion by building the capacity and resilience of NSW sex workers to:
  - Improve mental health outcomes
  - Reduce isolation in rural, regional and metropolitan settings
  - Increase knowledge about use of alcohol and other drugs
- Target and adjust SWOP services to ensure all NSW sex workers, irrespective of gender identity, sexuality, cultural identity or language spoken, achieve the same health, safety and human rights outcomes as other Australian workers

#### OUR MISSION:

**SWOP exists to provide New South Wales (NSW) sex workers with the same access to health, safety, human rights and work-place protections as other Australian workers.**

**INCLUSIVE**

**HOLISTIC**

## Goal Two:

### Develop and implement innovative best practice in everything we do

- Set the standard as a best practice sex worker organisation
- Be trusted and recognised as the leading voice in NSW on sex worker issues by:
  - Sex work community
  - Government
  - Policy makers and researchers
  - Public
  - Other stakeholders
- Continually evaluate and review our work to improve our practice
- Implement innovative and effective systems, policies and communication (both internal and external)
- Remove all barriers to community participation/engagement to improve sex worker wellbeing
- Promote flexible, needs-driven, and mutually educative, evidence-based outreach and programs
- Be a best-practice employer who encourages continual learning
- Facilitate positive outcomes relating to criminal and/or legal issues

## Development and implement innovat



SWOP spent the last year consolidating our best practice work. Our key achievement in this arena was passing Australian Service Excellence Standards (ASES) accreditation to certificate level on our first attempt, thirty months after achieving independence. Their report stated: "SWOP demonstrated an exceptional capacity for carrying out its purpose as a community based peer

education and support service." Rather than an accolade to affix to a wall, we'll be building upon this quality improvement assessment in practical and pragmatic ways that deliver results to NSW sex workers. For example, by streamlining budgets, SWOP has halved our administration costs, redirecting our resources to the front line, ensuring maximum service delivery to NSW sex workers.

SWOP worked to prevent negative structural change by sitting on 12 advisory committees (up 300%



SWOP staff attending the Hepatitis NSW Closing the Gap Day Afternoon Tea in March, with representatives from ACON Health, Positive Life NSW, NUAA and HIV AIDS Legal Centre

## TWO: Active best practice in everything we do



SWOP CEO Cameron spoke at the Australasian Society of Criminologists Conference in Hobart

on 2015-16) and 11 interagency groups. We testified at 2 Government Inquiries, and made 14 submissions to decision makers, regulatory authorities, and media outlets, advocating for the needs and perspectives of NSW sex workers. We removed barriers to community participation by providing training on the NSW sex industry to 134 service providers from 38 different organisations. We also maintained a strong presence in the mainstream media appearing in 22 media articles across the year.

We worked to maintain our presence as the trusted and leading voice on sex work in NSW through representing sex workers on four different research committees and projects, as well as through our attendance and participation at a number of local, national and international conferences. Four SWOP staff members were able to attend the 21st Annual International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2016) in Durban, South Africa, contributing a poster presentation, an oral presentation and workshop facilitation.

## Goal Two

# Joanna: Regional Outreach & Reporting



“Regional outreach was a big component of my work in the last year,” said Joanna, citing monthly visits to the Wollongong region along with trips to areas including Newcastle, Albury, Wagga Wagga, Bathurst, Dubbo, Orange and Griffith. This important aspect of SWOP’s state-wide brief includes providing services to sex workers outside of metropolitan Sydney, ensuring these workers are aware of and connected to local services, and that they know they can access SWOP via phone, email and social media. “Active participation in interagency groups is key to understanding issues in these areas,” said Joanna, before adding: “Developing relationships with police

has been really effective. Being on an interagency as an out sex worker is a step towards removing stigma.”

SWOP outreach has a strong focus on being adaptable and responsive to the changing needs of NSW sex workers. For Joanna this year that included scheduling extra needle and syringe program (NSP) pickups and outreach partnerships with the NSW Users & AIDS Association (NUAA), as well as encouraging and educating workers to use the same regulatory bodies as other Australian workers. “It’s about workers knowing who to contact, assisting people, but also empowering them to do that for themselves,” said Joanna. Joanna also did proactive outreach, attending parlours who garnered negative media attention this year, to ensure the workers were supported.

In addition to the outreach components of her work, Joanna has taken on responsibility for maintaining SWOP’s data. The key advantage of this for NSW sex workers is that Joanna brings with her eight years of outreach experience, which will undoubtedly enrich our organisation’s data analysis. This work includes collecting statistics and reviewing data to ensure that SWOP services are effective, relevant and well-directed – all key parts of SWOP being a responsive and accountable best practice organisation.

## Na Mon: Chinese Project



Na Mon with Jo Holden, Director Population Health Strategy & Performance, Centre for Population Health

The big innovation in the Chinese Project this year has been the creation of a WeChat group, which grew from anecdotal data collected by the project worker on outreach.

“The workers talk to me of their need of support going to a clinic. They say language barrier; they don’t know if they get deported or arrested if they test positive for HIV or other STIs; they thought they are doing illegal work; they are worried about discrimination; transport is also an issue. I help them if they lost, screenshot the timetable, and give them bus number and time to get to their sexual health appointment on time. I send them a Google map and teach them how to use – that’s how I break barrier. I support them to help themselves,” explains Na Mon, who views it as the essence of peer education, where the worker makes the decision to contact her, receives information, then makes the decision whether to go to the sexual health clinic or not.

WeChat allows SWOP to virtually attend



clinics with multiple different workers at the same time without leaving the office. The nature of shift-work means there are always some workers our outreach team doesn’t see in a parlour. “WeChat has allowed me interact with more workers that I have never seen before,” said Na Mon.

Na Mon built the profile of SWOP through being a trusted and leading voice on culturally and linguistically diverse sex workers via presentations at the 21st International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2016) in Durban, and at the Multicultural Women’s Sexual Health Conference, Evidence for Equity, in Brisbane.

Transience of NSW’s Chinese workforce is a problem that adds extra work to this project. “Lots of workers work for a very short time – get the money and go. Arrive in Australia and couldn’t find job they used to work in their own country, so sex work is one of the solutions to get stuff quickly, then go back to study, or old professional life,” said Na Mon.

## Goal Two

### Chantell: Community Officer



"I've moved away a lot from outreach, to address unmet needs with prison visits and court support," said Chantell. "Being incarcerated and being in that minority that's stigmatised the most, they can't talk about this. I'm able to offer that peer support, so they can talk about their life. I can also help them get support when they get out".

Providing individual support helps SWOP to identify and tackle structural barriers affecting sex worker health and wellbeing, from stigma and discrimination in legal representation, to losing housing while you're inside. "Without the one-on-one, I would not know about this stuff," said Chantell.

In her role as Community Worker, Chantell builds the organisation's profile through speaking engagements on transgender sex work at the 21st International AIDS Conference (AIDS 2016) in Durban, and on a variety of University campuses through the Network of Women Students Australia (NOWSA) and the Newcastle

University Students' Association (NUSA). "Being on a University campus is a bit like being on a movie for me. The fact that students want to know, they invited us, is exciting," said Chantell. After each of these events, a number of students who sex work connected with SWOP privately, citing issues like high levels of on-campus stigma and lateral violence from other students. SWOP upped our visible presence on campus through participation in the End Rape on Campus rally, and speaking at the Radical Sex and Consent Week.

"Having a voice in advisory groups is really important for SWOP because it gets us recognised by other services," said Chantell. Chantell is particularly enthusiastic about training crime prevention officers (CPOs): "By sensitivity training Police I get better outcomes for sex workers. When workers have issues, I can now touch base with the CPO at Surry Hills, because I sit on the same interagency as him."

## Tori: Outreach Officer

“While SWOP does lots of workshops and forums, we kept hearing sex workers on outreach saying wouldn’t it be nice if we had a social thing, where it wasn’t so much about something specific,” said Tori. From this direct feedback from sex workers, a new innovation - SWOP Social was born. It’s a monthly series of events that thus far have incorporated sex work themed movies, and high teas. “People come from all sectors of the industry,” explains Tori adding that these events are one of the ways SWOP is working on combatting lateral violence within the NSW sex industry. “When you meet someone and they become real, it’s harder to call them a junkie, or be upset about the way they work,” said Tori.

Despite having co-workers, parlour-based workers often report feeling isolated, and avoiding socialising with their co-workers outside of the workplace. “They’re often too afraid of being outed,” said Tori. SWOP Social is designed to improve sex worker wellbeing by standing in place of the social occasions, like work Xmas parties, where stigma might mean our industry’s workforce is missing out. Another barrier to sex worker participation can be the responsibility for childcare. “Workers wanted something that would be family or kid-friendly,” said Tori, so plans are afoot to run an all-ages SWOP Social early next year.



Removing barriers to participation also feature in other aspects of Tori’s work, including her work with young people. By shifting our afternoon drop-in at Wayside to their big breakfast, we have been able to have better conversations with young people doing sex for trade and sex work, including conversations about using alcohol and drugs. “Someone’s doing eggs; another person is juicing stuff; so it’s really casual and makes our interactions more organic, like preparing a meal with friends. The turnout can vary, but even when there are just two or three, it is nice because the young people are not trying to compete with each other, and the time spent together is higher quality,” explained Tori.



**ELIZABETH -  
Acting President**

Lizzie is a former sex worker with 39 years industry experience. She has her own coaching business centred on helping women achieve their dreams of personal and professional excellence. Lizzie is a Registered Nurse and has a strong understanding of the principles of Primary Health Care. Lizzie has served on committees of other non-profit organisations, and has been a SWOP Executive committee member since March, 2015.

**10/11 MEETINGS ATTENDED**



**JORDAN - Treasurer**

Until recently, Jordan was a permanent staff member at Scarlet Alliance, Australian Sex Workers Association Inc. In his 8 years as their Finance Officer, Jordan assisted with the preparation of 7 national forums & prepared the final audited financial statements for their annual report. He's also worked for RESPECT Inc. (QLD), and maintained the accounts for other sex worker organisations under Scarlet's auspicing agreements.

**5/8 MEETINGS ATTENDED**



**RACHEL**

Rachel is a sex worker who has worked in Australia and overseas for over two decades. Rachel has previously worked for SWOP and was the International Spokesperson for Scarlet Alliance. She is a founding member of Touching

Base, and has presented on a range of sex worker issues, including supporting and maintaining decriminalisation, Workplace Health and Safety, sex worker rights, law reform, training and education.

**7/9 MEETINGS ATTENDED**



**LARA**

Lara has been a sex worker for 17 years and adores her job. She has been a member of the SWOP Executive Committee for three years now, covering general member, Secretary, Vice President and President during her tenure. Lara's

journey through these positions has taught her much about governance, and she is really enjoying developing her skills in this area. Lara feels privileged to be able to serve the NSW sex worker community in this capacity.

**3/4 MEETINGS ATTENDED**



**SAUL - Secretary**

Saul has been a sex worker for over 25 years and the President of Touching Base Inc. for over ten years. As a sex worker rights activist in both New Zealand and Australia, Saul has long advocated for the rights of private sex workers to be

better recognised within legislation and regulations. He also played a significant role in the development of the Sex Services Premises Planning Guidelines (2004) for local councils in New South Wales.

**11/11 MEETINGS ATTENDED**



**JULIE**

Julie is a sex worker with long term involvement in the sex worker rights movement. She was the in-house manager of the former Australian Prostitutes Collective, and participated in the processes that led to and retained decriminalisation in NSW. She

is a consultant/author and co-author and investigator on a number of research projects, including LASH 1.0 and 2.0 and has published articles on sex work. Julie conducts a sex industry-specific town planning business.

**8/11 MEETINGS ATTENDED**



**PACO**

Paco brings to the table current lived experience as a male sex worker. Through his time on the SWOP Executive Committee, Paco has rounded out his personal experience by representing SWOP at workshops and discussions

during the 2016 Scarlet Alliance National Forum, World AIDs Day events, and other strategic meetings.

**8/9 MEETINGS ATTENDED**

SWOP also acknowledges the contribution of the following Executive Committee Members who stepped down during this year:

**ISABELLE**

**4/6 MEETINGS ATTENDED**

**KITTY**

**1/1 MEETINGS ATTENDED**

## THANK YOU

**The extraordinary results detailed in this report would not have been possible without the enthusiastic uptake of SWOP services by sex workers and sex industry businesses across NSW. We would also like to thank our staff and volunteers, particularly those on our Executive Committee.**



Thank you to The Minister for Health, The Honourable Brad Hazzard MP, and our principle funder, the NSW Ministry of Health. SWOP also acknowledges all NSW Health Districts, Sexual Health Clinics, HARP Units, and Aboriginal Medical Services, along with all the NSW Police Local Area Commands with whom we work closely.

The organisations that SWOP works with are numerous, but we particularly recognise: ACON Health, Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis & Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM), Aboriginal Health & Medical Research Council, Bobby Goldsmith Foundation, City of Sydney, Darcy House, Family Planning Australia, First Step NSP, Glyde Health, The Gender Centre, HIV/AIDS Legal Centre (HALC), Hepatitis NSW, Inner City Legal Centre, Kings Cross LAC, Kirketon Road Centre, Launchpad Youth Community, Magenta WA, Mount Druitt NSP, Mudgin-Gal, Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC), NSW Users & AIDS Association (NUAA), Positive Life NSW, Redfern Legal Centre, Respect QLD, S-Check, Scarlet Alliance, SIN SA, The Kirby Institute, Touching Base Inc., Twenty 10, UNSW Centre for Social Research in Health (CSRH), The Vixen Collective, Weave & The Wayside Chapel.

## FINANCIALS

SWOP was audited by DFK Laurence Varnay  
Find a detailed report on the financial position of SWOP  
as at 30 June, 2017 on our website:  
**[swop.org.au/association-documents](http://swop.org.au/association-documents)**

