

Monday, 22 February 2021

**SWOP Board statement regarding participation in the 2021 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade.**

The SWOP board supports the participation of sex workers in the 2021 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade. Sex workers were present as part of the original 1978 Mardi Gras protests and street-based sex workers in the Kings Cross helped defend the original 1978 march against police attack. The decision to participate in the parade to be held at the Sydney Cricket Ground on 6 March 2021 was made after careful consideration and was informed by the need to prioritise sex worker visibility in a broader community context.

The historical roots of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras was borne out of protest and radical resistance with the 78ers being celebrated in the parade. The assembly of LGBTQIA+ communities and cultures in any public forum is a testament to evolving changes for marginal and minority communities. As a result, the parade is a festive celebration showcasing the incredible progress we have made as LGBTQIA+ sex workers and an important space of celebration for float participants.

We see our participation as complementary to other forms of protest and assembly. We also acknowledge that there is a diversity of views amongst sex workers in LGBTQIA+ communities and cultures. The SWOP Board fully supports the rights of any sex worker and/or sex worker collectives who wish to join alternative forms of protest and we encourage the promotion of the public visibility of our work towards the increasing of wellbeing for sex workers, and sex worker rights and safety.