

SWOP NOW AN INDEPENDENT SEX WORKER HEALTH AGENCY

Sex workers in NSW now have an autonomous sex worker health organisation. As of 1 July, 2014 NSW's peak sex worker health agency, the Sex Workers Outreach Project (SWOP) began operating independently, as a stand-alone organisation.

Since 1990 SWOP has been funded by the NSW Ministry of Health (NSW Health) to provide sexual health information and support to sex workers in NSW, specifically in relation to HIV and other sexually transmissible infections. Throughout this period, governance had been managed by ACON, the peak NSW HIV/STI health promotion/prevention NGO.

SWOP Chief Executive Officer Kylie Tattersall said: "This is an exciting and historic moment for SWOP as an organisation, and indeed for sex workers all over the world, as it acknowledges the importance of peer education and the success of community-led responses to HIV. It marks the beginning of a new era. Sex workers in NSW can take great pride in the remarkable health outcomes they have achieved and sustained over the years, and I believe SWOP can feel some pride from participating in, contributing to, and continuing to maintain this outstanding outcome, too."

Over the course of the last year, SWOP has formalised the SWOP Transition Committee into a seven member sex worker Board of Governance. Adult Industry leader Madison Missina, who has assumed the role of SWOP Board President, said: "I am so proud and humbled to have been selected by SWOP's first board to lead us into this new era as their President. This is an honour that comes with great responsibility that I am respectful of. I will make it my mission to ensure that SWOP continues its phenomenal work, but also that our voices are heard."

These governance changes will support SWOP as an independent entity while it continues to deliver world's best practice HIV and sexual health outcomes for sex workers, and help take that delivery to the next level.

SWOP's evolution to an independent, sex worker-led organisation has only been possible through the support and guidance of a range of key people and organisations. SWOP CEO Kylie Tattersall said: "We would like to acknowledge and thank the many people who have contributed to getting us to this point, both recently and in previous years, especially the SWOP Transition Committee members, a mixture of sex industry peers and partner organisations, Janelle Fawkes the CEO of Scarlet Alliance, ACON, Herbert Smith Freehills, and the Ministry of Health for their ongoing commitment to, and support of, sex worker health and safety in NSW. It has been a long journey, made possible by the work of many."

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“We are excited to work closely with the new SWOP Board and NSW sex workers, leading SWOP into this new era, particularly within the globally recognised landscape of decriminalisation,” concluded Ms. Tattersall.

ACON CEO Nicolas Parkhill said: “We look forward to working closely with the autonomous SWOP as health sector partners, as our organisations continue to deliver key programs, policies and initiatives in sexual health.”

SWOP will continue to occupy separate premises in the 414 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills building, which is also occupied by ACON, Hepatitis NSW, HIV/AIDS Legal Centre Inc., NSW Users and AIDS Association, and a range of other NGOs.

Further information is available on the SWOP website: www.swop.org.au

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High resolution photography of SWOP Board President Madison Missina available upon request.

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