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**THE GAME: THE PERCIEVED IMPACTS
OF THE DECRIMINALISATION OF PROSTITUTION
IN AOTEAROA**

A thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the perceived impacts of the decriminalisation of prostitution in Aotearoa. It is a feminist analysis of the legislative change from prohibitive prostitution legislation (Massage Parlours Act 1978) to the Prostitution Reform Act 2003. Examination of the perceived impacts of the decriminalisation of prostitution are developed through analysis of submissions on the Prostitution Reform Bill, the Justice and Electoral Committee Report, and parliamentary debates on the subject of prostitution and decriminalisation.

These views about prostitution and the perceived impacts of decriminalisation in Aotearoa are compared and contrasted with interviews of four women who had a collective 50 years' experience and knowledge of the sex industry. Important factors illuminated in the investigation are: the language used to describe prostitutes and prostitution; the differentiation between social, cultural and moral concerns about prostitution; the value system that drives the stigmatisation of prostitutes; and the chasm between actual prostitution experience and public perception of prostitution.

The difference between the Prostitution Reform Act 2003 and the first draft of the Prostitution Reform Bill are shown to be indicative of the public perception that prostitutes are not legitimate citizens or women who are deserving of freedom to commercial sexual activity. The analysis process unearths a reiteration of stories about 'bad women' and finds that clients (men) are viewed as victims of prostitution. The structure of the political lobby in Aotearoa and the notion of a conscience vote are found to be bound heavily within a climate of the moral right. The control, surveillance, and reform of 'bad women' is central to the configuration of the Prostitution Reform Act 2003.

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