

Sexual assault

No one ever deserves to be sexually assaulted or raped but unfortunately, sexual can and does happen to sex workers. Due to the stigma still involved with sex working and outdated laws, sex workers are vulnerable targets for violence. Sex workers sell a service (not their bodies) and do not deserve to be raped.

Sexual assault is a crime

Sexual assault in Queensland is a crime. Any sexual activity without your consent qualifies as sexual assault. This includes rape, penetration, being forced to perform sexual acts and all kinds of indecent assault (such as being forced to watch a sexual act).

Attempted sexual assault or assault with the intention of forcing you to have sex against your will are all crimes and are taken very seriously by the law.

Sexual assault is a crime of power and not sex, and often involves violence.

If you've been sexually assaulted

There is no 'typical' way to act or feel after being assaulted. Everyone reacts differently, but there are many common responses, which you may or may not experience, including:

- shame/humiliation/dirty
- shock/disbelief
- fear of people/fear of rapist returning/fear of being touched
- guilt/self hatred
- disturbed sleep/flashbacks/nightmares
- isolated/unable to talk to anyone about the attack
- numb/depressed/unemotional
- not trusting people
- being startled easily
- overly talkative/feeling out of control.

There is no wrong or right way to react to trauma. You are not going crazy – but you are handling the situation to the best of your ability.

Reporting the assault

You may wish to contact the Sexual Assault Helpline (24 hours) to discuss your options before contacting the police.

Many workers do not report sexual assault to the police because:

- the stigma attached to their occupation
- they feel they won't be believed or may even be blamed for what has happened
- they are working illegally.

As a sex worker, you have the right to report or not to report a sexual assault. The choice is yours. Whoever you decide to tell, you are entitled to be treated with respect, sensitivity and dignity in a private and confidential manner.

Recovering from sexual assault

- Give yourself time and space to deal with what has happened. Allow yourself time to heal – there is no time limit. Permit yourself time to react to what has happened. Let yourself feel whatever emotions emerge. You may need to take some time off work.
- Talk to someone you know and trust and who will respect your decisions and choices.
- Seek support and/or counselling from a sexual assault worker.
- Leave major decisions for a while until you gain some inner strength.

Fact sheet for sex workers

- Don't blame yourself – it is **NOT** your fault.
- Acknowledge that you have the right to be safe, upset, angry, kind to yourself, silent, believed, heard, honoured for your survival and not blamed.

Statewide

Sexual Assault Help Line (24 hours)
1800 010 120

Brisbane

- Sexual Assault Service
Royal Women's Hospital
07 3636 5206
- Brisbane Rape and Incest Survivors Centre
07 3391 0004
- West Moreton Acute Sexual Assault Service
07 3202 2766 (24 hours)
- West Moreton Women's Health
& Sexual Assault Service
07 3812 0138
- Centre Against Sexual Violence (Woodridge)
07 3808 3299
- Immigrant Women's Support Service
07 3846 5400
- Redcliffe Community Health
07 3883 7300
- Zig Zag Young Women's
Sexual Assault Service
07 3843 1823
- Murrigunyah Aboriginal & Torres Strait
Islander Women's Corp Inc
07 3290 4254
- Redlands Health Service Centre
07 3821 9617
- Sisters Inside
07 3844 5066

- W Wild Sexual Violence Prevention Service
(Woolloowin)
07 3262 9877
- Wynnum Health Service
07 3893 8111

Gold Coast

- Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence
07 5591 1164

Sunshine Coast

- Laurel House
07 5443 4711
- Caboolture Community Health
07 5443 8300

Regional

- Atherton 07 4091 4036
- Barcaldine 07 4651 1311
- Bundaberg 07 4153 4299
- Cairns 07 4031 3590
- Emerald 07 4982 4358
- Gladstone 07 4979 1456
- Gympie 07 5482 7911
- Kingaroy 07 4162 5439
- Longreach 07 4658 3344
- Mackay 07 4968 3919
- Mt Isa 07 4744 4826
- Rockhampton 07 4922 6585
1800 017 382
- Roma 07 4622 2277
- Townsville 07 4775 7555
- Toowoomba 07 4616 6950
- Weipa 07 4069 7816
- Whitsunday 07 4946 2996
- Wide Bay/Maryborough 07 4121 5999