

Facts about Registering as a Sex Worker

This is a simple break down about what happens to your personal details when you become a registered private sex worker. SWOP has met with the registration office and we were given the following information.

The technical name for a private sex worker is a sole-operator brothel or escort agency. Only one private sex worker can work at or from one residential premise. Registration staff you deal with will understand “private sex worker”.

It is illegal to work as a private sex worker in the ACT if you have not first registered with the Office of Regulatory Services (ORS). This office used to be called Office of Fair Trading. While the name of the office has changed the paper work has remained much the same and you are able to get that from ORS or from the SWOP office.

The address for ORS is 255 Canberra Avenue, Fyshwick. Their hours are from 9.00 am to 4.30 pm Mondays to Fridays. They are closed on Public Holidays.

For your first registration you will have to go into the office to register. You will need to supply some identification (the most common ID is a driver license or proof of age card and your Medicare card). This is mainly to protect you from someone else using your name and details. You will also need to pay the registration fee – ORS can take cash, cheques or EFTPOS payments. Renewals can be done by mail so you will not need to go to the office after your first visit.

When you go into the Regulatory Office, there is a queue system and you will need to collect a number from the touch-screen ticket machine inside the front foyer. You need to first select “Registration & Business Licensing” then when a second screen appears, select “Other”. Your ticket number will be called to a particular customer service counter. Simply advise the customer service officer that you have come to register a private sex worker. They will redirect you to another counter where you will be served by one of a small number of officers dedicated to registering private sex workers.

If you do not already have a registration form the officer will provide you with one and can help you complete the form. They will take your form and the fees. Your details will be entered into a computer and a receipt will be given to you. When your application has been fully registered you will be provided with a certificate of registration, signed by the Registrar. This will usually happen a couple of weeks after you register.

The only person who has access to the computer files once they have been entered is the Senior Manager (currently this is Roger Sharp). Your hard-copy or paper file will be stored in a locked cabinet and the only person with access to this is Roger. Both the sole-operators’ and the commercial- records are filed in this cabinet.

The public does not have access to any information about you. Officers at ORS cannot, and will not, provide information to nosy neighbours who want to know if there is a sex worker in their street!

If you decide that you no longer want to be a private sex worker in the ACT, you can go into the office and ask for the hard-copy file to be given back to you or you can let the registration lapse and the file will be destroyed (shredded).

The computer file is a different matter as this file CANNOT BE DELETED. This includes when the registration has lapsed. The Senior Manager is the only person to have access to the details of your registration in the computer. Your record will automatically become a "locked file" when "sole-operator" is put in. Even though the file is on the same database as other industries and professions registered or licensed by ORS, your information cannot be searched or printed out by other officers.

Access to your current registration file (hard-copy and/or computer) can only happen if an authorized person can show a real need to see the list. The Registrar can authorize certain individuals (police and public servants) by name. Authorized people could include ATO, Health, police, Centrelink and Immigration. If an authorized person is allowed access for a specific purpose they will be given the date of registration, the address you are currently working from and your contact number (if it is on the records). An ORS officer will supervise any access.

The registration period starts from when you lodge your first application. Registrations expire on 30 September, each year. ORS will normally send you a reminder to renew your registration in September.

If you have changed your address and have not told ORS you may not get your renewal reminder. You should return your renewal forms and payment before 30 September. If you do not want ORS to post anything to you (including your certificate or registration), please make sure that you mark DO NOT POST on the front of your application. You will need to advise them how you want to receive letters or your certificate (e.g. - you may want them to call you when it is ready). You can also email ORS at ors.bil@act.gov.au

You can contact the Office of Regulatory Services on 6205 3796 or SWOP on 6247 3443 for further information including details of the current fees.