

**Young People Involved in Prostitution**

**in Victoria**

by Linda Hancock,  
Policy Studies,  
School of Australian and  
International Studies,  
Deakin University,  
Geelong, Victoria,  
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**ABSTRACT:  
EVALUATING PROSTITUTION LAW REFORM IN VICTORIA: YOUNG  
PEOPLE AND PROSTITUTION**

This research focuses on three main areas. As a follow-up to a similar study conducted 5 years earlier for the Neave Inquiry into Prostitution in Victoria, it examines first, the extent of young peoples' involvement in prostitution, the types of prostitution activity and factors related to youth involved in prostitution; secondly, whether there had been an increase in the number of young people involved in prostitution and thirdly, it examines policy changes affecting young people and factors with particular bearing on policies affecting youth involved in prostitution.

The study method involved a search of records, in log books, case books and police social background reports for the calendar year 1989, as well as interviews with those police officers, youth workers and others most closely involved with youth, at 11 Melbourne metropolitan police district offices, police units and special squads in contact with youth, three youth training centres and two inner city youth welfare programs.

The study found that there were 132 recorded contacts for 104 young people. About half these contacts were identified through police sources, 24% from welfare agencies and 23% through youth training centres. The majority were aged between 15-17 years. About half (52%) were involved in (illegal) prostitution -mainly soliciting or loitering or soliciting or loitering for immoral purposes- and 48% were involved in 'social' or exploitative prostitution, such as sex in exchange for accommodation, employment, drugs, or food. Where drug use was known, 82% were known to be involved in drugs of some sort (including alcohol); 40% of these with narcotics and 42% with prescription or amphetamine drugs.

Contrary to our predictions, the study found a 38% decrease in the number of young people involved in prostitution, although the proportions contacted by police, youth training centres and inner city youth services remained approximately the same. The reasons for this decline may reflect one or a combination of:

- the concentration of the study on the inner city, (although police special squads and records across Melbourne were examined);
- the influence of the Children and Young Persons Act (1989) in reducing police contact with non-criminally offending youth who might formally have been the subject of a police protection application;
- diversification and changes to the structure of the sex industry following the Neave Inquiry, resulting in contraction, greater concentration and easier police surveillance of street work, a growth in less visible forms of prostitution in escort agency and brothel work and greater geographic spread of the industry.

These findings are discussed in the context of changes to Victorian Children's Court and Child Welfare legislation, legislation protecting children from sexual abuse and exploitation; the Neave Inquiry into Prostitution; worsening structural unemployment affecting young people and other relevant state and commonwealth policies.

Key themes of particular relevance to policies affecting young people involved in prostitution include:

the diversity of youth involved in prostitution; the frequency of a background experience of sexual abuse; a background of family crises; lack of income security; homelessness and inadequate housing; characteristic patterns of work in prostitution; the greater frequency of prostitution among young women and an overrepresentation in terms of involvement in drugs.

'Surely it is sorrow enough to know that one child is being sexually abused, or that one child is living on the streets and selling its sexuality. If there are two, or three, or three thousand it is unbearable knowledge... the child we see, or know to be in danger is our real responsibility, a fact which media campaigns and prurient articles obscure from us ."

Judith Ennew (1986) *The Sexual Exploitation of Children*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 143-144.

## **Introduction**

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**Bibliography**

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## Young People and Prostitution

### Introduction

Since the Neave Inquiry into prostitution in Victoria in 1985, there has been speculation about whether prostitution is increasing or decreasing. Subsequent to the Children and Young Persons Act 1989, being phased in over the early 1990s, another question is whether the form of prostitution has changed and how the laws are actually working in terms of the impact on various interest groups and on sex industry workers.

This report cannot speak to some of these wide-ranging issues, but focuses on one aspect of prostitution which is separable on legal and other grounds. As a 5 year follow-up to the study conducted for the Neave Inquiry, this study focuses on **the involvement of young people in prostitution.**

Given our concern to recognize young people's vulnerability to exploitation, social welfare and criminal law legislation contains specific provisions aimed at protecting young people from exploitation; particularly exploitation by adults. In relation to prostitution, Victorian criminal law prohibits the procuring of young people into prostitution and there are laws specifying a minimum age for workers in brothels.

Street prostitution has been illegal for many years and is still illegal following the Prostitution Regulation Act, 1986.

There is also a history of the state 'protecting' young people (particularly young women) from themselves when they are deemed to be 'at risk' or when their behaviour contravenes arbitrary standards of morality. Running away, sexual promiscuity and prostitution have been the basis for state intervention under welfare legislation. 'Status Offence' provisions have been applied disproportionately to girls, reflecting parents' and state agents'

greater concern with the perceived moral deviance of young women whilst often condoning comparable behaviour by young men.

Thus, age and to some extent gender, have defined a different legal response to young people under 18 compared with adults. While young people are perceived as needing special protection under the law, adults are seen to have rights and choices which young people do not have.

This issue of protectionism versus rights is central to any consideration of the state's response to young peoples' involvement in prostitution. While the law may define 18 as the starting point of adulthood, many young people assume adult rights or life styles much earlier.

In the area of more public or visible assertions of sexual independence by young people under 18 (as in the sexual contract of prostitution), whether or not such acts constitute exploitation and whether young people have the right to enter such work are complicated issues.

## **1. THE AIMS OF THIS STUDY**

This study follows a similar methodology to that adopted in the study conducted in 1984 for the Neave inquiry (Hancock 1985). The aims are:

- 1. To examine the extent of young peoples' involvement in prostitution, their participation in various types of prostitution activities and where obtainable, factors related to the criminal behaviour and social backgrounds of young people involved in prostitution.**



**2. To compare the findings of this study with those of the 1984 study conducted for the Neave Inquiry into Prostitution. (Hancock 1985).**

**3. To place the findings of this study within the policy context of Victorian legislative changes and changes in the provision of service to young people - such as the Children and Young Persons Act, 1989.**

## 2. THE POLICY CONTEXT

Given the focus on whether agency responses to young people have changed since the Neave inquiry, the policy context includes changes in child welfare practice (as a lead-up to the Children and Young Person Act of 1989 implemented in the early 1990s), changes to legislation concerned with protecting children from sexual abuse and increasing recognition of worsening structural unemployment affecting young people.

### **Children's Court and Child Welfare Legislation**

One thrust of the Carney Committee's recommendations (Carney, 1984) which preceded and shaped the new Community Services and Children's Court legislation was to reduce state intervention which was predicated on welfare grounds. The resulting Act, The Children and Young Persons Act, has been implemented in stages since it was passed in 1989. As an attempt to provide an integrated response to the needs of young people and their families, this legislation was based on the following principles: commitment to social justice and equity; separate family and criminal divisions within the Children's Court; support for children and their families; minimum intervention (with 'harm or the likelihood of harm as the sole criteria for protective intervention'); respect for cultural values; and accountability of decision makers. (Community Services Victoria, 1990, 2-3)

Of main relevance to this study is that under the new Act the principle of preserving and strengthening families and the principle of minimum intervention, will reduce the number of young people becoming statutory welfare clients. The key issue is whether minimum intervention, premised on social justice grounds, results in better or worse outcomes for youth. Much of this hinges on whether alternative services are put in place for supporting young people in crisis which in turn, has become a critical resourcing issue

with Community Services Victoria, and a bone of contention for services which provide for voluntary clients.(Green, 1993)

Under Section 63 of the Act, protective intervention is based on "whether or not a child has been, or is likely to be harmed", (Community Services Victoria, 1990, 12) thus excluding the general provisions of 'exposed' and 'not exercising adequate supervision and control over the child or young person' which constituted grounds for protective intervention under the previous Community Services Act (1970). Whereas previously, behaviour such as running away, homelessness, status offending, drug and alcohol abuse, might have justified protection orders against young people, the Court's power is restricted under the new Act.

Under Sections 71-72 of the 1989 Act, there are similar provisions for 'irreconcilable difference' between child and parents as under the previous Act, except that the new Act demands conciliation counselling and a 'cooling off' period of 21 days before a protection application may be lodged with the Court. Under Section 110, the Court may make an interim protection order not exceeding 3 months, whilst deciding on a protection application or an application involving irreconcilable difference. Along with the expectation that the number of young people on protection applications would be reduced, the Children and Young Persons Act 1989 (Section 86) recognises that additional services would be needed to avoid inappropriate use of protective intervention of young people who are homeless or difficult to control. Under the new Act, it is not possible to place protective cases in a remand centre. However, a child can be placed in a secure welfare service "if there is a substantial and immediate risk to the child". (Community Services Victoria, 1990, 14).

In practice terms, changes to the legislation and the Health and Community Services policy of deinstitutionalisation have meant dismantling secure, often

high security, state-centralised institutions for youth, separating youth offenders from non-offenders, youth under 15 from older youth and youth on remand from those placed on detention orders in secure care, providing more crime prevention and family and youth support services at the regional level and establishing secure care as a short-term last resort.

This study was conducted as the Children and Young Persons Act 1989, was being introduced, (the provisions relating to grounds for admission to wardship were not implemented until September 1991). Brief mention should therefore be made of criticisms both in Victoria (Hancock 1980, Murray 1981) and overseas (Chesney-Lind 1982) of gender bias in the way welfare or protection applications have been used over recent years; a factor which the 1989 Act seeks to address. Changes in Victoria are detailed below.

**In Victoria an overview of the last 20 years reveals that:**

- In 1972 young women over 12 years comprised 47 percent of all protection applications whereas young men comprised only 19 percent. (Leaper 1974)
- In 1975, 79 percent of non-neglect protection applications were female and 21 percent were male. Sixty three percent of females (compared with 8 percent of males) were presented to Court on protection applications. (Hancock, 1980)
- In 1984, 70 percent of court ordered new admissions to Winlaton Youth Training Centre were admitted on welfare applications, mostly on the grounds of 'exposed', 'uncontrolled' or 'inadequate supervision and Control' and only 9 percent of young females (compared with 78 percent of males) were institutionalised under sentences for criminal offences. (Department of Community Welfare Services unpublished figures quoted in Hancock, 1985)
- In the financial year 1988/89, of 654 young women admitted to Winlaton, 50 percent (or 324) were admitted on protection orders. (Community Services Victoria, 1991, 6)

- Of the 572 Police Protection applications taken out in 1989 relating to young people 13 years and over, 61 percent (or 351) were females. Of the 303 Community Services Victoria applications for young people aged 13 or over, 61 percent (or 185) were females. (Community Services Victoria 1991, 6)
- In the 1988/89 financial year 15 per one hundred female wards compared with 8 per one hundred male wards (ie twice the rate) were incarcerated by administrative processes (referred to as PARRC's or Placement at Remand and Reception Centres). Reasons cited included 'indiscriminate sexual behaviour' homelessness, being sexually assaulted. (Community Services Victoria, 1991, 7)
- Interviews at Winlaton for this study with youth workers having a direct involvement with the cases examined, established that in 1989, Community Services Department youth workers were still using sexual promiscuity as a criterion of establishing risk with PARKS (internal returns to custody) and more for girls than for boys - where the focus is on criminal rather than moral behaviour.
- Responding to a 1986 Community Welfare Services discussion paper on the Redevelopment of services for children in Allambie, Baltara and Winlaton, the Deinstitutionalisation Working Party (circa 1986) drew attention to the gender bias of protection orders. The four major reasons for detention in Winlaton were found to be running away, family conflict, parents not coping and sexually acting out. 'The fact that young women (and not young men) are being incarcerated for these reasons shows that there is an underlying sexist base resulting in a decision for incarceration'. (Deinstitutionalisation Working Party, circa 1986, 5).
- More recently, Higgins (1990) found that guardianship orders frequently involved judgements about young women, which were based on moral rather than legal grounds.

The basis of these criticisms is that status offence provisions<sup>1</sup> have been used to control young women's behaviour by coercive state intervention into their lives, whereas similar behaviour by young men is accepted, and young males who experience such intervention have usually committed criminal offences.

Substantiating recent practice, a Department study (Gogorosis 1991 cited by Community Services Victoria 1991,7) found that a large proportion of young women in the study had been placed on protection orders for activities such as running away from home or for behaviour not tolerated by the community, rather than being exposed to significant or potential harm.

Recent studies confirm the findings of studies in the late 1970s (Hancock 1980) that protection applications result in longer stays in institutions and more intrusive and prolonged state supervision, compared with court dispositions where young people have committed criminal offences.

Past studies have shown that the majority of young people involved in prostitution are female and that young people known to be involved in prostitution are rarely prosecuted but have traditionally been processed by way of protection applications<sup>2</sup>. Any change in policy in this area is of key relevance to the way that young people and particularly young women are dealt with by police and welfare agencies.

Changes to the number or characteristics of young people involved in prostitution and contacted through sources such as police and youth workers in the late eighties/early nineties have changed, this may reflect the impact of recent changes to child welfare legislation.

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<sup>1</sup> Status offences refer to non-criminal behaviour which would not permit police intervention for adults, such as being at large (homelessness) taking drugs or alcohol, being deemed 'at risk' and so on which have permitted intervention because the young person is a juvenile.

<sup>2</sup> In the 1984 study, of 63 young people in the police-contacted sample who were known or suspected of prostitution, 90 percent (57) were female and 75 percent (47) were subject of a protection application. (Hancock 1985, 27)

## **Legislation Protecting children from sexual abuse and exploitation**

The Neave inquiry recommended that there be provisions to protect young people against sexual abuse or exploitation.

'the report recommends that it should be an offence to

- induce a person under 18 years to engage in prostitution or to continue engaging in prostitution
- live wholly or partially on the earnings of the prostitution of a person under 18
- pay a person under 18 for the performance of sexual services
- allow a person under 18 to enter or remain on premises for the purposes of engaging in sexual activity for payment.'

(Neave, Inquiry into Prostitution, Summary of Final Report 1985, p.14)

The Report drew attention to anomalies and inconsistencies in the laws covering age-related sexual activities.

Subsequent to the Neave Inquiry report, the Victorian Attorney General instructed the Law Reform Commission of Victoria to review the sex offence provisions of the Crimes Act 1958, which resulted in a range of initiatives concerning child victims of sex offences.

Foremost among the recommendations of the Law Reform Commission were evidentiary and procedural improvements to the trial process, such as abolition of the corroboration rule in relation to child witnesses evidence (giving the Judge discretion to comment on the reliability of a particular child witness' testimony). The report recommended that hand up briefs be used in committal hearing and that the court have discretion to make video taped

interviews admissible as evidence in chief subject to the child's availability for cross examination.

Despite changes in the laws relating to sexual abuse and increasing recognition of the long term seriousness of intra-familial sexual abuse services to support victims (the majority of whom are women) are still recognised as deficient.

Critical of the Victorian Department's service response a recent Community Services Victoria (CSV) Report (1991, 8) noted the following:

- A study conducted by the (then) CSV Young Women's Reference Group (1990) found that 'issues of sexual abuse are often not addressed in case planning and case management!'
- A 1990 study by Protective Services for Children and Young People found that '55 percent of statutory clients do not receive adequate sexual abuse treatment or support services'.
- Inadequate service response may be attributable to lack of referral to appropriate services and/or the inability of some services to provide for the specific needs of younger women.
- The focus of H&CSV policy on reuniting families has resulted in return of child victims to households where the perpetrator still resides and the risk of continued abuse is high. Such practice is at odds with prioritising the needs of the victims. The report went on to outline response to sexual abuse as one of seven key action areas in which Community Services Victoria will 'implement strategies to respond more effectively to the special needs of young women who have been sexually abused'. (Community Services Victoria, 1991, 21).

### **The Neave Inquiry into Prostitution**

Some young peoples' involvement in prostitution is more 'social' according to the definition adopted for this study, and has little to do with the sex industry



as such. Although this report does not set out to evaluate innovations and legal changes subsequent to the Neave Inquiry, changes to the structure of the (adult) sex industry post Neave are likely to have had an impact on young people.

Since the Neave Inquiry, the sex industry has diversified in terms of an increased geographic spread of licenced brothel work (with approved brothels in areas away from street beats, from Elsternwick to South Melbourne, Flinders Street, Fitzroy, Brunswick and North Melbourne and even middle class suburban Camberwell.) Street planning initiatives by St Kilda City Council reduced the redlight areas and, by concentrating the location of street work, made it more visibly and easily surveilled by police. Following these changes, workers have shifted from street work, (Neave, 1988) which was relatively concentrated in the inner city, to more geographically spread and less visible forms of the industry, in escort agencies or licenced brothels, legal under Victorian legislation. Young peoples' involvement in these less visible forms of sex work are very difficult to quantify.

Commenting on these changes, a welfare agency worker commented:

'We believe that young people are now more drawn into these areas of the industry than in the mid '80s. It is therefore arguable that there might be as many if not more, young people involved in the sex industry, but that their entry to the industry is not through the hitherto traditional path of street prostitution (Personal communication, 1993).'

### **Worsening Structural Unemployment Affecting Young People**

It is important to document policy initiatives at State and Commonwealth levels from 1985 which set the context for interpreting the findings of this study.

In terms of the more general context, the single most far-reaching change since 1985 has been the deepening of the recession from 1988 and the impact

of the recession and government economic policy on increasing unemployment generally and for youth in particular.

In 1990, Victoria had the highest number of unemployed youth aged 15 to 19 years (35,700) and the national total was 134,000. Unemployment rates for teenagers have consistently been high; with a rate of 16.8 percent in October 1990 compared to 7.2 percent for the entire labour force. (Australian Bureau Statistics 1990, Table 22, Cat no. 6203.0). By April 1991 the unemployment rate for 15 to 19 year olds seeking full time jobs rose to 25.8percent. (Australian Bureau Statistics 1991, Table 24, Cat. no. 6203.0). Of course, these average figures mask rates closer to 40 percent in some areas and the concentration of unemployment amongst already disadvantaged poorer, Aboriginal and non-Anglo-Saxon immigrant groups.

The strains on an already stretched welfare sector have impacted on services for youth. Recent studies argue that child poverty and youth unemployment are structural; the result of resource distribution, public policy and technological and structural changes in the labour market, which have resulted in a decrease in full-time positions for youth and an increase in casual and part-time work.

(Sweet 1988, 33)

**State and Commonwealth policies and report recommendations of relevance include:**

- the development in Community Services Victoria of a single track system for protective services;
- re-direction of Community Services policy to the use of case planning with community-based programs aimed at providing appropriate services and redirecting anti-social behaviour (Duggan 1991, 9);
- increasing emphasis on re-structuring schools in ways that will better meet the needs of students, reduce alienation and risks attendant on early

school leaving (Burdekin 1989(b)) and on addressing the vocational training and employment problems of early school leavers and the long-term employed. (Youth Guarantee, Employment Access Program)

- increased recognition of homelessness and factors of family conflict, family unemployment, poverty and lack of income security as precursors to homelessness and the need for family support services and services to address the needs of unemployed youth.

- awareness of the need for integrated support and referral services for youth, integrating advice on areas such as accommodation, recreation, adolescent health, education and employment, youth and the law; such as the North West Youth Supervision Unit (Victoria) which assumes responsibility for youth parolees and youth attendance orders in the region (Mansfield, 1991, 71)

- Following the Summit on Youth Unemployment in 1992, Prime Minister Keating announced an extensive job creation program to combat youth unemployment, increased funding for TAFE places and an increased focus on vocational training for 15-19 years olds.

- Improved services for homeless youth in the form of supported accommodation and homelessness allowance.

However, it should also be noted that resourcing for income support, vocational training, youth services and family support services have undergone budget cuts which undermine their efficacy. There have also been criticisms that State governments have 'done little or nothing' to act on the recommendations of the National Inquiry into Homeless Youth. (Impact, 1990, 7)

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Very little insight into the extent of prostitution by young people is gained from 'official' sources such as Australian Bureau of Statistics or police statistics.

For example, Victorian Police statistics presented in the Statistical Review of Crime, indicated that in 1989/90 one male juvenile and in 1990/91 two female juveniles were proceeded against for 'loitering and soliciting by prostitutes'. (Victoria Police, 1989/90, 62, Victoria Police, 1990/91, 67).

Quite patently, such figures are inadequate indicators of young peoples' involvement in prostitution and an approach 'closer to the ground' needs to be adopted.

Interviews were conducted with Melbourne-based police officers, youth workers and youth welfare program co-ordinators and youth workers with a direct involvement with the cases surveyed. Their records and files for 1989 were perused to obtain a sample of young people involved in prostitution. It should be noted however, that the focus was on obtaining a sample of youth, and interviews with police officers, youth workers and co-ordinators are not representative of those groups, nor are their comments generalisable, for example, to the Victoria Police in general.

The sample of young people was the major focus of the study with results reported in Section A of Chapter 4. In addition, records from the Child Exploitation Unit and from the Office of Corrections were analysed for information on adults involved in procurement or child sexual exploitation offences. These results are reported in Section B of Chapter 4.

## **The Sample of Young People Involved in Prostitution**

The sample of young people was derived from a range of agencies, including Police and Youth Welfare Agencies, which are in contact with young people. During 1990-91, agencies were visited, their files for the year 1 January to 30 December 1989 were analysed. This data was augmented by interviews with key police and youth workers who routinely deal with young people and were in a position to name juveniles they knew or suspected of being involved in prostitution. We were thus able to collate a sample of young people involved in prostitution, by cross referencing duplicated agency contacts.

### **Interviews with police and youth workers covered the following:**

- estimates of the number of young people involved in prostitution during 1989;
- young people 'known' for involvement in prostitution-related activities or suspected of such;
- the type of prostitution-related activities known to police, whether involving males, females or both;
- any known child sexual exploitation which could be prosecuted under the offence of procuring a minor into the practice of prostitution;
- whether or not young people involved in prostitution were also involved in drug use;
- the nature and extent of any adult prostitution-related offences in the area which may bear some relationship to the involvement of young people.

Using the approach of analysing existing records, available reports and interviewing key personnel involved with the sample, the sample consisted of young people deemed by these means to be involved in prostitution, and was derived from police sources, inner city youth and street work services and juvenile custodial institutions.

Following a similar approach to the 1984 study, the sample was derived from the following sources.

1. Police 276 forms and case books entries.<sup>3</sup> This entailed perusing all 276 forms for young people under 17 years of age who were the subject of a court appearance. Police 276 forms and case book entries were perused at the 11 Police District Offices in Melbourne;
2. Interviews with police at Melbourne's 11 Police District offices, at St Kilda Police station and interviews with members of various police squads including the Vice Squad, the Child Exploitation Squad and the Transit Police;
3. Winlaton Youth Training Centre for girls.<sup>4</sup>
4. Turana Youth Training Centre and Baltara (for boys).
5. Youth agencies concentrated in St Kilda and the inner city.

### **Justification of Methodology**

Both this study and the study conducted for the Neave Inquiry have adopted an indirect approach to estimates of youth prostitution based on analysis of agencies' records and interviews with police and youth workers, rather than approaches made directly to young people themselves.

At the time of the Neave Inquiry study in 1984, (Hancock, 1985) it was felt that this approach was less intrusive and more ethically sound than interviews with the young people themselves.

An indirect approach has the advantage of including young people who may not perceive their behaviour as prostitution (especially male homosexual prostitutes and youth exchanging sex for food or accommodation) but who are

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<sup>3</sup> Police cautions, young people under 8 years of age and protection applications on the grounds of parental neglect or ill-treatment (which mostly involved younger children anyway) were excluded from the study.

<sup>4</sup> Since the time of this study, Winlaton Youth Training Centre has become Numawading Youth Residential Centre and a separate Secure Welfare Service, catering for young women for periods of up to 21 days, was opened in 1992.

engaged in a sexual exchange that is potentially exploitative. On a subject as blurred, private, hidden and stigmatising as prostitution, we were able to avoid the ethical problems of confronting young people with their prostitution and prying into their private lives. In an area with very little data, our approach is a start.

### **Limitations of the Study**

However, the approach adopted also has some recognisable limitations. A study based on Melbourne police officers' and youth workers' contacts with youth will concentrate on that sample of young people who are involved most frequently and visibly in prostitution. It is thus no surprise to find problems like family conflict, running away, drug use and homelessness are related to the public visibility of some of these young people. However, data on family background, socio-economic status and school education background was often not systematically available and therefore precluded comparisons on these dimensions.

Any attempt to quantify prostitution is fraught with difficulties. Not only are there problems with defining and uncovering prostitution, but estimates may vary depending on their source. The submission to the Inquiry into Prostitution by the Inner City Street Kids Program (1985, 4) suggested that some agencies may exaggerate the problem as a means of securing public empathy and financial support for their services.

This method of estimating the number of young people involved in prostitution will count those who are more visibly and regularly involved who are more likely to come to the notice of welfare workers and police. Due to resource and time limitations, and the need for comparability with the earlier study, other agencies outside St. Kilda and the Inner City or informants such as school teachers and social workers who have contact with young people were not included in the study. Numerical estimates in this and the previous

study need to be qualified by these limitations. At the same time, however, the most serious, troubled or visible cases may also be those most in need of supportive services.

## **Definitions**

### **• Prostitution**

There are many problems involved with studying a subject as private and ill-defined as young peoples' involvement in prostitution. The first problem is to establish what prostitution is and the second is to establish a method of measurement.

It is well documented that prostitution is potentially broad (Daniels, 1984) and that prostitution has different meanings to different people. For some, legal definitions define the boundaries and prostitution includes those activities encompassed in various criminal and planning codes. Others take a broader view and include 'social' prostitution, which may cover exchange of sex for goods, accommodation, drugs or attention.

The definition adopted in this study encompasses a wide range of behaviour with blurred and overlapping categories. Prostitution is conceptualised on a continuum comprising:

#### *(i) Illegal Prostitution*

Acts presently punishable under Victorian legislation which generally speaking, refers to the provision of sexual services in return for payment. Specific charges may include procuring a person to become a prostitute, keeping a brothel, using premises for the purposes of habitual prostitution, living on the earnings of a prostitute, soliciting for immoral purposes, soliciting or loitering.



(ii.) *Prostitution for Goods or Services/Child Exploitation*

Acts involving the provision of sexual services in return for goods or services such as drugs, food or accommodation, overlapping with acts, involving indiscriminate sexual promiscuity which often are motivated by desires for approval, attention or affection which render the young person vulnerable to exploitation. The former are seen to constitute child exploitation, often in the context of homelessness and young peoples' lack of income. These latter acts are broadly conceived a 'social' rather than 'illegal' prostitution (outlined above), and may relate to short-term survival (exchanging sex for food or accommodation) or behaviour on the fringe of prostitution, rather than the explicit intention to engage in prostitution. An example of the latter is a youth aged 15 brought to police notice by his mother who said he had been performing oral sex on men unknown to him and had been staying out late at night and she feared he was putting himself at risk of prostitution.

The inclusion of such cases is justified on the basis of the blurring into 'social' prostitution occurring with young males involved in providing sex to (usually older) male clients, young women who run away from home or become homeless and accept accommodation with strangers. In these cases, police or welfare intervention is often aimed at preventing a slide into illegal prostitution or at circumventing adult exploitation of young people.

The purpose of the wide definition adopted here is to cover those acts which may broadly be perceived as prostitution, in order to throw some light on the sexual exploitation of young people and to gain some idea of the extent of 'the problem'.

- **Young People** refers to youth aged between 8 and 17 years.

- **Form 276** refers to the police form which is completed by police informants for all cautions and for all court appearances, including both protection applications and charges on criminal offences. The Informant includes comments on social background information and details of the offence (or the behaviour in the case of protection applications). There is also the provision for general statements about the young person, the family or other relevant factors (see Appendix 1 for a copy of Form 276). A senior police officer then decides whether to drop the action, institute an official police caution or refer the young person to court.

One copy of the 276 form is retained by the Informant's District Office. Other copies are sent to the Children's Court and to the Department of Community Welfare Services if the young person is admitted to the care of the Department.<sup>5</sup>

- **Protection Applications** (P/A's) automatically involve an appearance before a Children's Court Magistrate. (Since such applications do not involve a charge of criminal behaviour, these children or young people cannot be cautioned and must appear in court.) An application is made to the court for the protection of a child or young person on various grounds (as defined by Section 31 of the Community Welfare Services Act, 1978 at the time of this study and now defined by Sections 63, 71 and 72 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1989). Under previous legislation, the grounds for protection applications were broad and included parental ill care, neglect or exposure to corrupting influences; irreconcilable conflict between parents and their dependants; and lastly, the non-criminal (but aberrant) behaviours of children or young people. These last grounds are often referred to as 'status offences' since it is only a young person's age-status which permits police to intervene and to

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<sup>5</sup> By way of background, in Victoria, children or young people who are apprehended by police may be charged with a criminal offence (whereupon they may be cautioned under the Police Cautioning Program or summonsed to appear before a Children's Court Magistrate) or they may be deemed to be a child or young person in need of care and protection, and presented to court on a Protection Application.

present young people to court for non-criminal behaviour. (In this study, only protection applications involving the behaviour of the young person, mainly on the grounds of 'exposed' resulted in inclusion in the sample of young people involved in prostitution.)

- **Case book** entries refer to Police District Officers' daily records of public complaints made to police and police action on cases. Case books for 1989 were scanned for cases of prostitution involving young people under 17 years of age and were followed up from 276 forms which suggested some involvement in prostitution.

#### **4. RESULTS**

Results are presented in two sections.

**Section A** presents data on the sample of young people obtained through police and welfare agency records and interviews.

**Section B**, presents the data on adult sexual exploitation of young people, obtained from the Office of Corrections and the Child Exploitation Squad relating to persons sentenced or charged with adult exploitation offences.

Chapter 5 then presents some case profiles of youth involved in prostitution.

##### **Section A. The Sample of Young People involved in prostitution.**

The names of young people involved in prostitution for the year 1989, were obtained from the sources shown in Table 1.

In the present study, there is considerable overlap between those young people seen by various agencies. Approximately 104 young people accounted for 132 reports from agencies in the 1989 study. About half the reports (70 or 53 percent) were from police sources 31 (24 percent) were from welfare agencies and 29 (or 22 percent) were from Winlaton. A handful of young people were known in up to four or five police districts as well as being known to welfare agencies and Winlaton.

**Table 1: Comparison of 1984\* and 1989 samples of young people involved in prostitution**

Source of data	1989 data		Neave Inquiry Data 1984**	
	N	%	N	%
- <b>Police 276 forms and Case book entries (from 11 Melbourne Police District Offices)</b>	55	53%	63	53%
- <b>Interviews with police at Melbourne's 11 Police District Offices, Vice Squad, Child Exploitation Unit, Transit Police</b>	15		49	
- <b>Winlaton Youth Training Centre</b>	29	22%	37	18%
- <b>Turana Youth Training Centre and Baltara</b>	2	1%	nil	
- <b>Inner City Youth Welfare Programs<sup>6</sup></b>	31	24%	60	29%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>132***</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>223***</b>	<b>100%</b>
Total number of young people	104		169	

\* Hancock (1985, 18)

\*\* For comparability with the present study, 14 youth contacted direct by the Inquiry were deleted from the 1984 data in this table.

\*\*\* Some multiple counting occurs as some youth are known to more than one agency.

Compared with the 1984 Neave Inquiry data, police reports in 1989 accounted for about the same proportion of youth (53 percent), however the composition of this group was different, as was the action taken. This may reflect police response to the new Children and Young Persons Act, 1989, which, as discussed earlier, placed restrictions on the grounds for protection applications.

In 1984, the 63 young people (or 56 percent of 112 youth known contacted by police) had official police action taken; resulting in court appearances for all

<sup>6</sup> One youth agency dealt exclusively with young people, under 18 years of age of whom about half were on some form of statutory order and just under half were female. Most were aged 13 to 18 years. In contrast the other agency was a mobile outreach crisis intervention service which had young people as about 30 percent of its case load.

63; a protection application for 47 (or 75%) all on the grounds of 'exposed' and a criminal charge only in 16 (or 25%) of cases.

In the 1989 data however, only 15 (or 21%) out of 70 youth in the police sample had official police action taken. All but one were girls. As a result of police action, there were court appearances for the 15 (9 or 60%, as protection applications and 6 solely on charges for offences). The remaining 55 young people were identified through case book entries or interviews, where no official police action was taken against the young person.

Youth involved in prostitution on record at youth welfare agencies fell by about half in numerical terms and accounted for a lower proportion of youth in 1989 (24%) compared with 1984 (29%).

The absolute number of young people involved in prostitution, and known to police and key youth welfare agencies has decreased between 1984 and 1989. A fall of about 38%. In 1989, 104 young people, accounted for 132 contacts with police/welfare agencies compared with 1984, when 169 young people accounted for 223 contacts. The reasons for this decline will be discussed later.

#### **Sex:**

The majority of the 104 young people in the sample were female (73 or 70%) and 30% were male. (This represents an increase in males compared with 1984, when 14% of the 169 youth were males (Hancock, 1985, 21.)

#### **Age:**

The majority (76%) were aged 15 to 17, with 13 percent aged 14 and 11 percent aged 13 or less.

This concentration amongst older youth matches exactly the proportion aged 15 to 17 in the 1985 study (Hancock, 1985, 22).

**Table 2 Age and Sex - Young People involved in Prostitution**

Sex	Age (in Years)							Total
	12 or less	13	14	15	16	17		
Female	1	2	12	26	19	13	73(70%)	
Male	5	3	2	6	3	12	31(30%)	
Total	N %	6 6%	5 5%	14 13%	32 31%	22 21%	25 24%	104 (100%)

**Drugs**

As shown in Table 4, a significant proportion of young people (82% or 53 out of the 64 for whom drug use was known) was involved with drugs of various kinds.

Involvement in drugs was unknown for 40 young people (39 percent of cases) and was not seen as a problem for an additional 11 young people. In all, 53 young people (44 girls - 60 percent of all females, and 9 boys or 52 percent of all males in the sample) were reported to be involved with drugs. Where involvement in more than one drug was indicated, the most serious was recorded in the order presented in the table below. For the remainder (excluding unknown), narcotics (44%), prescription drugs (19%) and amphetamines (23%) were the most frequently taken drugs. Although numbers are small, males and females appeared to have equal involvement (proportionately) in narcotics use. However, while 23 percent of girls were involved in taking amphetamines, no boys were recorded as taking these. Use of solvents/glue and marihuana was higher than indicated in the table, as use was usually combined with more serious drug use (narcotics, prescription drug abuse or amphetamine use) which took precedence in the table below.

**Table 3: Young Peoples' Involvement in Drugs\* (where known)**

<b>Drug</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Narcotics	17(39%)	4(44%)	21		(40%)
Prescription	7(16%)	3(33%)	10		(19%)
Amphetamines	12(27%)	-	12		(23%)
Solvent/Glue	2	-	2		(4%)
Marihuana	3	1	4		(7%)
Alcohol	3	1	4		(7%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>44(83%)</b>	<b>9(17%)</b>	<b>53</b>		<b>(100%)</b>

\*This excludes 21 males and 19 females, a total of 40 youth for whom involvement in drugs was not known and 11 youth - 8 females and 3 males for whom drug use was not considered to be a problem.

In this study, drugs were considered to be a problem for 51 percent of the sample. This compares closely with 49% of the 1989 sample.

In the 1984 study, a similar proportion of youth (approx. 50 percent) were involved in various combinations of heroin, pills, glue or marihuana.

Although the large number of youth for whom drug use is unknown prevents any conclusion from this result, the significant proportion (47%) known to be taking drugs (excluding alcohol) is high. Given that females constitute 70 percent of the sample, they are overrepresented in terms of drug taking (in particular, amphetamines) compared with males.



**Table 4: Type of Prostitution and Sex**

Type of Prostitution	Female	Male	Total	
			N	%
<b>1.Criminal Prostitution</b>				
Keeping a brothel	1	nil	1	1%
Soliciting for immoral purposes	nil	13	13	12%
Soliciting or loitering	36	nil	36	35%
Suspected soliciting or loitering	4	nil	4	4%
<b>2.Prostitution for Goods/ Services/Child Exploitation</b>				
(Sex in exchange for accommodation employment, drugs, food etc./non- criminal prostitution)	32	18	50	48%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>100%</b>

In a year when according to police statistics, only one young person under 17 years was charged with a prostitution offence, involvement in prostitution was considerably higher. Of the 104 young people identified by police and welfare agencies, 52 percent were involved in 'criminal prostitution', with females clustered in soliciting or loitering and males predominating in soliciting for immoral purposes and 48 percent were involved in exploitative or 'social' prostitution. Young males known to be soliciting were most likely to be 16 or 17 years of age and young females known to be soliciting or loitering were most likely to be aged between 15 and 17. Although comparable data is not available for the complete 1984 sample of 169 youth, in the sub-sample of 63 youth known to police, 54 percent were involved in criminal prostitution and 46 percent in prostitution for goods/services (Hancock,1985,27).

## How Young People Came to Agency/Police Notice

About one quarter of the sample (27%) came to police, youth worker or agency notice as a consequence of explicit prostitution (being involved in loitering/soliciting or escort work). Other significant proportions came to notice as victims of child exploitation (15%), being found in the street (13%) being reported by parents or relatives (9%) or committing a criminal offence (6%).

**Table 3: How Young People Came to Notice**

How Came to Notice	SEX		Total
	Female	Male	
Prostitution	19	8	27 (26%)
Other Criminal Offence	6	nil	6 (6%)
Found wandering, in the streets, runaway	10	4	14 (13%)
Reported by parent/relative	6	3	9 (9%)
Through under-age sexual activities	3	nil	3 (3%)
Victim of crime	2	nil	2 (2%)
Family Known to police	nil	2	2 (2%)
Victim of child exploitation (eg by employer, sex for accommodation)	4	12	16 (15%)
Not known	23	2	25 (24%)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>104 (100%)</b>

There is no comparable data for the 1985 study.

### A Note on Police Comments on Prostitution

All Melbourne metropolitan Police District Offices were visited just prior to realignment of District boundaries during 1990. Officers at the Transit Police, the Vice Squad, Child Exploitation Unit and St. Kilda police station were also interviewed later. Young people identified through police sources were overwhelmingly concentrated in the inner city St. Kilda - Prahran - and inner city areas.

Typically, suburban districts such as Broadmeadows, Bentleigh, Frankston, Dandenong, Altona North, Northcote, Nunawading, Caulfield, Flemington, Broadmeadows could name few youth involved in prostitution. Most who came to light in these areas were involved in exploitative sex, usually for accommodation or by an employer.

In interviews with police it was frequently commented that suburban prostitution probably exists but is undetected because it takes more subtle and hidden forms than in the inner suburbs. Most community Policing Squad work concerning children, focused on physical or sexual abuse by parents' or children's misbehaviour (truancy, criminal offences or running away). Cases involving sexual exploitation were often referred to the Child Exploitation Unit, or the Child Protection Squad. Compared with 5 years previously, Prahran Police had less contact with the St. Kilda scene which is policed by St. Kilda police and other mobile squads.

#### Youth Worker/Youth Agency comment on prostitution

Similar to the 1985 study, youth workers stressed that only a small proportion of street kids or homeless kids become involved in prostitution. The main comment was that kids who are new to the St. Kilda or inner city area are now more likely to be singled out and referred back to their region than previously. If from the area, family support services or referral to other youth support agencies are a priority. Youth workers also commented that prostitution involvement in the city is more likely to involve kids coming in from other areas to visit the city and then return home, whereas the St. Kilda scene was perceived as more permanent, involving youth who come to the area to stay for some time. Workers commented on how difficult it is to know whether youth are involved in exploitative sex for drugs or accommodation, given how private and hidden prostitution might be.

In interviews, police and Welfare workers agreed that it is hard to know how much prostitution goes on in the suburbs, although most identified St. Kilda, the inner city and inner city ring suburbs as most likely.

Youth involved in prostitution are diverse and range on a continuum from street kids who work the street, to those who work discretely and occasionally, to those who would not view as prostitution, behaviour such as exchanging sex for drugs or accommodation. They also agreed that a small but highly mobile group (often passing between major capital cities) is quite evident, being involved in street prostitution, escort or illegal brothel work and other offenders, often to service a drug habit. These youth are well known to police and welfare agencies

## **Section B. Data on Adult Sexual Exploitation of Young People**

### **Office of Corrections data**

Search of Community Based Orders for the year 1/1/89 to 31/12/89 showed no child-exploitation prostitution-related offences were recorded as receiving these orders for the year. However, this conclusion is problematic, as without a search of case record details, there is no way of ascertaining the extent to which convictions for sexual penetration, indecent assault or other sexual offences, involved prostitution-related or child-exploitation offences.

A search of sentences to custodial terms for convictions on prostitution-related child exploitation/sex offences similarly showed no clear convictions for procuring offences.

**Table 6: Office of Corrections data on adult sex offences**

Offence	Community Service Order N	Custodial Sentence N
Sexual penetration	117	55
Incest	4	12
Indecent assault	46	66
Gross indecency	1	10
Child abuse/ill-treat children, neglect	1	-
Kidnapping, abduction	2	5
Prostitution		
. loitering	1	13
. live on earnings	-	3
. soliciting	-	1
Other sexual offences	4	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>176</b>	<b>167</b>

As the above table shows, a number of adults are recorded as receiving Community Service Orders or custodial terms for prostitution offences, but there are no details as to the age of clients or workers or as to whether child exploitation was an issue.

- **The Child Exploitation Squad**

Set up in 1984, The Child Exploitation Unit operates within the Victoria Police. It has both reactive and investigative roles and it focuses on interfamilial sexual abuse and multiple offender paedophiles.

A 'typical profile' of the multiple offender paedophile is a male, aged 30 to 50 years, often living alone or with his mother, in a lifestyle that involves kids; such as scouts, pool supervision or pinballs (interview with Child Exploitation Unit). The evolving pattern of exploitative behaviour begins with giving kids

money and presents, videos, computer games and beer. They often encourage a group of kids and then 'pick their mark' subtly or serially - working through a group of kids. There is a gradual build-up to a sexual relationship in starting with showing pornographic videos. They are not usually forceful or violent and use subtle pressure to get what they want. They frequently have multiple victims. For example, one convicted offender was a sports coach on 429 charges of indecent assault and 20 charges of gross indecency, involving 11 victims.

However, these paedophile cases fit more with a definition of straight-forward sexual offences, rather than prostitution as defined in this study. Members of the squad interviewed commented that those cases of sexual abuse which could be regarded as the exchange of sex for money goods or services were less frequent but usually involved adults (men) not previously known to the young person, with street kids as the most vulnerable group.

Three such cases included:

- a man providing accommodation, marihuana and occasionally money to street kids in exchange for sex;
- a man providing videos, video games and alcohol in exchange for sex;
- a man attracting runaway kids to his place and providing a place to stay in exchange for sex.

However, such exchanges are often not perceived as exploitative by these kids, since prostitution is regarded as a normal means of livelihood and as part of their lifestyle. The comment was made that kids frequently see themselves as exploiting these men. Homelessness and poverty are seen as bigger problems for this group than prostitution and sexual exploitation.

## **5. Case Profiles of Young People Involved in Prostitution**

As outlined earlier, youth workers and police were asked to think back over the previous year and identify young people who had been involved in prostitution (as broadly defined in this study). Details were taken regarding name, age, sex, drug use, type of prostitution and any other relevant social/family background factors). Agency records and police 276 forms and casebooks were then checked for additional information and details were collated on cards for each individual.

Some case profiles are presented below categorised under police, youth welfare agencies and Winlaton Youth Training Centre, describing young people according to information provided by these agencies. (This approach was taken since information may reflect organisational approaches and priorities in the sorts of details recorded, rather than an 'objective' profile of the young person. For instance, young people who gain confidence in youth workers over time, may be more likely to discuss personal experiences related to, for example, sexual abuse than in a once-only encounter with police.) To highlight the issues discussed later, cases have been selected to represent a spread in terms of age, sex, circumstances and so on.

These cases show the full range of prostitution, ranging from street soliciting, brothel and escort work to sexual exchanges for drugs, accommodation, goods or keeping a job which are categorised as sexual exploitation.

### **I. Youth Identified Through POLICE Sources**

(Selected from interviews with police and 276 Case book reports).

- Female (15 years), drugs not mentioned, prostitution for accommodation.

'C' has lived with her grandparents for 2 years due to conflicts with her mother. She is often missing for days on end. Her grandmother reports 'she is a foul-mouthed, sluttish nymphomaniac with absolutely no morals'. She turns up at home every now and again to sleep and to change her clothes. 'She sleeps with anyone she can get her hands on, under piers and in parks. She sleeps with men for a bed'.

- Female (15 years), heroin user, street prostitution at the time of arrest.

Arrested on earlier assault charge and returned to Winlaton. Freely admitted prostituting herself to raise the money for her habit. Her boyfriend is a 'known drug addict presently on bail'. 'Her family background is disastrous and she refuses to acknowledge her parents'.

- Female (15 years), heroin user, brothel prostitution.

'F' left home to live with a friend who works as a prostitute at a brothel where 'F' worked a few times. She does not want to return home. Mother associated with drug dealers and uses heroin. A brother is in prison for murder. Mother thinks a hostel placement may suit 'F'.

- Female (16 years), heroin user, street prostitution.

'D' was apprehended by police in Grey Street, St. Kilda, saying she was 'loitering for the purposes of prostitution'. She has no prior criminal convictions and was given a caution.

- Female (15 years), heroin/speed user, street prostitution.

'T' admits to prostituting to support her speed/smack habit. Her parents separated 10 years ago and her mother works in Sydney as a prostitute to support her heroin habit.



- Female (14 years), drugs-injects speed, prostitution.

Described as a 'constant runaway' with problems of alcohol, theft, truanting, vandalism, being exposed, drug abuse, family incident, squatter. Steals money from telephone boxes and is a member of a gang.

- Female (15 years), uses alcohol, sex for accommodation.

She has been living for 3 weeks with a man whom she met at a disco and knows only his first name. 'She is a constant runaway' from CSV hostels, often missing for months at a time. She states her father physically abuses her and because of this she refuses to go home. 'She claims she was pack raped by 7 males a week ago in Altona on the beach, but refuses to name any offenders'.

- Female (15 years), smokes cannabis, brothel prostitution.

She left school at 15 and attempted the robbery of a bank in Footscray. Worked under an alias for two weeks at a massage parlour by stating she was 19. She made \$200 a day for her services which included up to 8 people per shift. She stopped working there when the manager found out she was only 15.

- Female (16 years), drugs not mentioned, sexual exchange/exploitation.

Sister notified police concerned that X is doing massage and nude photos with men. X told police that she does nude photos for various men and her 'employer' takes a 50 percent cut of the proceeds. She said she is scared to leave 'Bill's' employ due to threats.

- Female (17 years), drugs (unspecified), prostitution.

Lives with mother and brother in Prahran. Reported rape by a client who allegedly had promised her money for sex, so she could obtain drugs.

- Female (16 years), drugs not mentioned, sexual exchange/exploitation.

'R' is intellectually disadvantaged and was reported to police by foster mother, worried that 'R' is having sex with a 26 year old male married milkbar proprietor who picks her up to take her to the park and pays \$10 for sex. This has been going on for about 2 years. Natural father is serving a 3 year sentence for incest with 'R'.

- Female (16 years), drugs not mentioned, sexual exchange/exploitation. 'W' was introduced to 40 year old 'Barry' through an acquaintance and was taken to a city apartment. Over 4-6 visits, he took more and more revealing photos in 'kinky positions' and on one occasion gave her \$50 to have sex with him, which he filmed. 'W' did not feel right about this but 'Barry' promised her fame and fortune. He gave her Malibu to drink to help her relax and she admits feeling dizzy and flushed'.

- Male (15 years), drugs not mentioned, sexual exchange/exploitation 'P' went to the city with a friend and met up with street kids who took him to behind the city square where he met 'John' who was well dressed and took 'P' to house in Essendon where he performed oral sex and attempted anal penetration in exchange for money

- Male (15 years), drugs not mentioned, sexual exchange/exploitation. 'M' had been reported missing for about two months and was staying with an older man, known homosexual and paedophile who gave him accommodation in exchange for sex.

- Male (12 years), drugs unknown, sexual exchange/exploitation. 'C' was introduced to 'Les' who he started to meet at the railway station before and after school. 'Les' gave 'C' small amounts of money to view his penis and to masturbate him and showed him pornographic pictures. 'C' got worried and told a teacher who notified police.

- Female (14 years), not involved in drugs, works as an escort in city hotels.

'F', a ward of state, was reported as missing. Mum says she is OK and rings her regularly now. She 'is prostituting but doing alright, only works in high class hotels and earns good money'. She told her mother she enjoys her life, enjoys being pampered and earning good money and she 'can't live on pocket money'. Police wrote: 'If located, would not be inclined to use SCV warrant. This is also what her parents want. While she is happy and healthy and is in contact, leave her as she is'.

- Female (15 years), drugs unknown, brothel worker.  
Is living with a friend aged 18 who is a prostitute, grows dope and sells drugs.

- Female (15 years), takes speed, prostitutes in St. Kilda.  
Ran away because of a fight with her mother, is a ward of state cared for in a house run by the Salvation Army. Mother is an ex-heroin addict and prostitute who lives in a motel in St. Kilda. Mother has set 'T' up with clients. 'T' is believed to be prostituting herself so as to support herself.

- Female (17 years), drugs unknown, escort agency worker.  
Has been a runaway since the age of 14 and has been on the road (Qld., N.T., N.S.W.) for a long while.

- Male (15 years), uses crack, soliciting.  
'M' is on a warrant in N.S.W., has been in numerous institutions and keeps running away to frequent King's Cross and Central Station, while staying at refuges or on the streets. He and his brothers were crack dealers and are 'known to prostitute themselves when short of money'. His Melbourne companion is a known paedophile who pays 'M' for his services.

- Female (15 years), takes speed, prostitution.

Mother reported 'F's' speed addiction, that she does as she pleases, won't go to school or find a job, steals from her mother, and 'has sex with unknown males to get money to buy drugs'.

- Female (15 years), drugs not mentioned, sexual exchange/exploitation. 'K' worked part-time at a milkbar where her employer forced her to perform oral sex. 'He would tell me not to tell anyone and at one stage, he offered to give me more money to keep quiet'.

- Female (14 years), drugs-unspecified, prostitution. 'F' came to Melbourne from Adelaide, has stayed in various houses in the West and has no means of support. 'She has conned meals and accommodation from people who feel sorry for her and has prostituted on occasions to get money; she has been living on the streets since she was 12'. 'She said she wanted to go back on drugs and had found people in Footscray who would supply her with them (supposedly for free)'.

## **II Youth Identified through Youth Welfare Agencies**

(Compiled from youth work interviews and agency case records)

- Female (16 years), heroin user, street prostitution. 'C' was using heroin and prostituting in St. Kilda prior to admission to Winlaton. She came to Winlaton after being violent and overdosing on heroin. She is under investigation for credit card fraud but has no previous charges.

- Female (14 years), heroin user, street prostitution. 'L' had been in Melbourne from N.S.W. for about 3 months and was working as a prostitute to support her drug habit. She has used heroin since she was 12 when she left home and lived in squats in the Rocks area. She was wanted on

charges of robbery and assault and flown back to N.S.W. but was back in St. Kilda within 2 days.

- Female (14 years), uses heroin and pills, prostitutes to support her drug habit.

Originally from Sydney, has run away from home 6 times in the last year.

The first time she ran away at 13 to King's cross and was raped. She reports using heroin twice daily plus 'pills'. She was staying in squats before police apprehended her on the street.

- Female (17 years), uses heroin and pills, street prostitution.

Has been in Allambie as a Ward of State and in Winlaton, when she absconded and went to Sydney for 2 months. She appeared in court 4 times in 1988 for prostitution and drug offences. She admitted herself in early 1989 to a drug rehabilitation centre to address her addiction. 'Her parents maintain love and commitment for her but will not accept her drug use in the home'. In mid 1989, she was raped by a customer. When she reported this to St. Kilda police, she was 'advised of procedure but decided she wants no further action'. She told the Street Worker Program there were a lot of younger girls working on the street, aged 14 and 15 years old and only charging \$20 for straight sex or blow jobs and not using condoms. She said they were undercutting the market and annoying older workers.

- Female (16 years), uses heroin, prostitution to support drug habit.

'S' exhibits extreme 'at risk' behaviour. She is very much the victim of the current and long-standing hostility that exists between her parents. She moves erratically from place to place and seems to always put herself at risk in relation to sexual and drug abuse. She finds herself frequently under the attention of police. She has been charged with trafficking, using an illegal substance, maintaining premises for prostitution. She has lived in squats in Melbourne, Sydney and the country, was 5 months pregnant, squatting in South Yarra and using heroin daily.

- Male (16 years), uses pills plus marijuana street prostitution.

'C' was seen down at The Grove with other boys. First noticed by Street Worker Program in the city. Police had allegedly assaulted him after he caused some trouble (possession of Marijuana).

- Female (17 years), uses pills, alcohol and speed, suspected of prostitution.

This young woman is definitely involved in exploitative relationships. 'P' spends a lot of time hanging around the city streets with her friends, often they are without accommodation (she was 15 at first contact with the Street Workers Program). Originally from Queensland, the family has broken down with the father in Queensland. The mother (now dead) has relatives in Melbourne who are not involved. 'P' was on a statutory order in Queensland. Referred to Crossroads and youth housing program.

- Male (16 years), drugs (not known), street prostitute in St. Kilda.

'C' has been prostituting for a few years now (does not see himself as homosexual). He didn't get along with his family (step-parent) stayed at friends places and squats in St. Kilda when he left home. He has no permanent home and often sleeps in Brotherhood bins. He is a statutory client - now he has committed offences.

- Female (17 years), uses heroin, street prostitution.

'C' was a heroin user - very heavy and for long time. She prostitutes to pay for drugs and for money to live. She is on probation. Often wanting to get out of the scene - but after making a break, formed a relationship with a dealer and could not break the cycle. She moves when the heat's on in St. Kilda (by police). She has minimal family contact with mum and defacto and lives with boyfriends and clients; but has no stable place to stay.

- Male (17 years), heroin and speed, street prostitution.

'D' went back home after going into Detox but then moved back to Melbourne to live in a squat. Became reinvolved in speed and alcohol, so went back to working to support his habit. He was known to work while attending school e.g. he organised to score for someone else - he got rolled so to make up the money, he went down to The Grove.

- Male (17 years), uses speed, alcohol and marijuana, street prostitution.

'T' comes backwards and forwards from the country to The Grove 'more for the social side and support' of the other boys. He tends to leave The Grove when the bad weather comes because it is not as much fun.

- Female (16-17 years), drinks heavily, uses pills, drinks metho, prostitution for survival and money.

'S' was on a statutory order but this was dropped officially because she was considered 'not a concern'. As far as her welfare was concerned - even though she was literally living on the streets and had no home, she was taken off the Statutory order. She has been known to sleep in telephone boxes and squats. There is possible sexual abuse by father and grandfather but she is reluctant to talk or accept help. She denies she works as a prostitute.

- Female (15-16 years), probably heroin user, definitely intravenous user (either heroin or speed), prostitutes.

'Her mum prostitutes so she does it to be with her'. She possibly does some parlour work as she is not often seen on the streets. She has been to Winlaton and Tranmere Street.

- Male (17 years), drinks heavily, takes pills, prostitution and exploitation. 'Y' lives with an older guy and has been in contact with Street Worker Program for 4 years on and off. Originally from the country from a

broken home, 'Y' came to Melbourne and hangs around both the city and St. Kilda. He is not accepted by others in St. Kilda, so he would move interstate.

### **III Youth identified through Winlaton Youth Training Centre**

- Female (17 years), heroin user, street prostitution.

'C' is supporting her boyfriend, a drug pusher with a habit. She ended up doing burglaries to get money for drugs and to live.

- Female (14 years), pill user, escort work.

'F' started off as an incest and sexual abuse victim. She has low self esteem but is provocative and would pass for 18 at 14 years of age.

- Female (15 years), uses pills, prostitution.

She was living with underworld heavy criminals who used her sexually and involved her in crime. She claims they made her prostitute and she was raped and sexually abused. She informed police but no charges were laid.

- Female (15 years), drugs (unspecified), prostitution.

An aboriginal girl, brain damaged through substance abuse. She prostitutes to get out of depression or for drugs or approval.

- Female (16 years), uses pills and dope, prostitution for accommodation. 'K' was rejected by her mother early on. She is street smart and sophisticated and would sell her body for day-to-day survival.

- Female (16 years), uses heroin, pills, street prostitution.

Deserted by parents, living with sister.

- Female (14 years), uses alcohol, some pills.

Very promiscuous, especially when drinking e.g. has serviced guys (strangers) on trains and has accepted money. Has been fostered to present family from



the age of 3 months then 'has grown up belonging to CSV'. She was sexually abused by her foster brother at the age of 9.

- Female (15 years), uses marijuana and pills, sexual exploitation and extreme exploitation. 'F' lives with 'friends' (males) well into their 20's. She claims they are giving accommodation but later we discovered this is in exchange for sex. 'F' lives in squats and is generally itinerant. She 'attaches herself to older people'. She comes from a broken home. Her mother is dominated by the new boy friend. 'F' rebels and leaves. She has been sexually abused by her brother.

- Female (16-17 years), uses mainly alcohol, sexual exchange/exploitation. 'G' lets herself be abused by men because she is weak. She 'trades sex for acceptance'. 'G' is pregnant to current defacto.

- Female (15 years), uses speed (intravenously) serapax and avil, prostitution for drugs.

'H' is very sexually active especially with older guys and known drug users and dealers. She is very drug oriented. She stays at houses with older males and is exploited by them. She has moved from refuge to placement to refuge. Her present boy friend physically abuses her.

- Female (15 years), 'will wipe herself off the face of the earth with whatever she can get her hands on'.

'S' engages in prostitution for money 'as a survival thing'. She is also sexually exploited by older males, e.g. picked up in a stolen car with men 10 years older than her (strangers). She will approach guys in the street just for somewhere to sleep. 'S' felt rejected by her family even though she has a large family network. Her older brothers are also into drugs. She is very self destructive and suicidal. The father is alcoholic. The mother died when she

was 9-10 years old. She often places herself in dangerous situations and is frequently truant from school.

- Female (15 years), drugs not known, promiscuity.

Separated from mother, can't cope with the rejection. Runaway, absconds when found, very aggressive, involved in criminal acts.

- Female (17 years), no drugs, sexual exchange/exploitation.

'D' is extremely exploited and 'really at risk'. She is obviously retarded and has been raped (more than once) by males in the city. She is 'used by taxi drivers'. It is 'common knowledge' among them about her. Police (city) know her by sight. She goes up to police (and other males) and asks if they 'want sex'. She was sexually abused by the father and emotionally abused by the mother and sister. She has had a heart condition and is on depoprovera as a contraceptive.

- Female (15 years) uses speed, valium, marijuana and alcohol, procuring.

While living with her step father (dope dealer) 'T' was assisting him with deals to young people. 'T' procures young girls for sexual relationships for her step father'.

- Female (15 years) uses heroin, valium, pills, street prostitution.

'Living on the streets of St Kilda'. 'She comes across as being very damaged through drugs' and 'has a tendency to ramble on in conversation'. 'She seems unable to see any way of coping in the future without drugs'. 'P' has attempted suicide and self mutilation. Her parents separated at age 4. She feels rejected.

- Female (17 years), uses heroin, street prostitution.

'D' engages in street prostitution to support the habit she has had for 4 years. She denies prostitution but her occupation is listed as prostitute in a 1988

Form 276. She was picked up in '88 for helping her boyfriend sell heroin. She is very open to exploitation by older males, e.g. getting drunk with 4-5 older (in 30's) males at discos. Originally from S.A., her parents divorced when she was aged 6.

## **6. KEY FINDINGS AND THEMES.**

The foregoing findings and case excerpts point to a number of themes which have a bearing on appropriate policy responses to young people involved in prostitution.

### **1. Diversity of young people involved in prostitution**

The findings point to four main categories or groups of youth involved in prostitution. These might be broadly categorised as drug dependent youth, street kids, youth vulnerable to exploitation because of homelessness and youth sexually exploited by adults (such as employers or drug dealers). Although there is overlap between these groups, this categorisation may help in the processes of identifying background factors and outlining needs.

It appears that a significant sub-group support their drug use through prostitution and sometimes, property crime. These young people are often most visibly involved in prostitution on the street. Regarding the last group, the results of this study show that some young people are sexually exploited by adults through employment or the young person's need for emotional contact or affection from an adult. Some of these young people are in school and living at home.

Taking the second and third groups, it may be useful to differentiate between the much larger category of homeless youth, and street kids, since despite similarities, the needs and priorities of these groups can be quite different.

As pointed out by Gokhale (1987, 16) homelessness has been used to refer to a wider age range (16-25 years) than street kids (usually under 18). In terms of needs, access to affordable long term housing is highlighted as the primary need of homeless youth, whereas, reflecting their younger age, street kids'

needs are broader (shelter, food, cash, recreation and counselling in survival, social and vocational skills). Streetkids generally have somewhere to live, although they 'may not always live there' and they 'usually return home after a short stay'. (Gokhale, 1987, 16)

'Streetkids are persons under 18 years of age, who either willingly or circumstantially spend several or frequent nights in a month away from 'home' on city streets and/or stay during that period in emergency or temporary accommodation or with companions, outside of immediate, extended or foster family network or economically independent living. They keep contact with those in a similar situation for friendship, support, recreation or joint activities, and usually lead a wandering life style". (Gokhale, 1987, 16)

In a 1986 study of 210 young people appearing in Perth Childrens Court or placed in institutions or a hostel, Gokhale (1987, 18) found that 53 percent identified themselves as streetkids in the past or at the time of the study (and 89% were males). The majority (76%) of streetkids had left school early (between grades 8 and 11); only 7 percent were employed; 66 percent were dependent on social security benefits or support from institutional placement and there were high rates of offending (Each youth had committed on average 32 offences). The study concluded:

'it is clear that family background, educational standard, and the emotional state of these youth make them vulnerable to committing offences'. (Gokhale, 1987, 19)

Others have elaborated the theme where lack of opportunity in the spheres of paid work (in either the formal or informal waged economy) or unpaid work (especially domestic work) propel young people into crime as a means of surviving economically. White (1989, 137) argues that these decreases in opportunities, coupled with cuts to social security benefits and inadequate social supports, propel young people into crime for survival. One illustration

is that half the respondents to a phone-in survey on the Job Search Allowance admitted to stealing, dealing in drugs or engaging in prostitution to supplement their incomes. (Campaign for a Fair Deal, quoted by White, 1989, 146).

## **2. Background/Experience of Sexual Abuse**

In this study, it was evident that young people particularly young women, exchange sex for a bed for the night. Some youth workers commented that these young women do not see this as prostitution or as exploitation but as part of 'life on the streets'. This concurs with Burdekin's (1989) finding that crimes such as break and enter, prostitution, car theft and drug dealing are part of daily life on the streets.

A study of 206 unemployed 16 and 17 year olds in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia (Trethewey and Burston, 1989, 46) found similarly that a substantial porportion 17 percent (34) of young people were living away from home on no income. They relied for support on friends, welfare agencies, casual work, a youth refuge, savings, going into debt and stealing.

"In order to survive, individual young people said they begged on the street or stole. One 16 year old said she had moved in with a 62 year old man because this meant she would have a roof over her head".

(Trethewey and Burston 1989, 46)

In this study, Winlaton workers highlighted the common pattern of sexual abuse by step-parents, uncles and friends of the family among young women involved in prostitution. They reasoned that sexual abuse establishes sex as a commodity to be exchanged. They surmised that young women abused sexually learn about sex as something to be used as a means of attracting male

attention. These young women are reportedly often unable to differentiate between appropriate and inappropriate sex. Some are seen to respond to male dominance and see sex as a way of pleasing men.

Youth Workers estimate that the majority of young people they work with, especially in St. Kilda, are victims of incest or at least inappropriate sexual conduct by someone known to them. One agency could name 11 young people who have worked in prostitution, who have experienced sexual abuse. It was frequently commented that the occurrence is probably higher as these details are not spoken of with some young people.

On another tack, case book entries and interviews with police revealed an alarming frequency of young women who had been the victim of rape by a client.

The vulnerability of prostitution workers to sexual abuse is well documented in the literature. Hatty (1989) argues that the level of sexual violence from clients is alarmingly high. Because the more dangerous forms of sex work are illegal and because juveniles are working illegally anyway, sex workers lack redress to the law when they are the victims of sexual abuse or property offences.

More importantly intrafamilial sexual abuse of the young has been found to result in feelings of self blame and low self esteem by the victim. A Canadian study of victims of abuse found that people who have been abused over a long period of time experience a loss of self esteem and confidence. (Geller, 1991, 11). The study found that women expressed feelings of shame, humiliation, isolation and guilt. It also found that running away from home at a young age, or leaving home after high school were escapes from abuse mentioned by their (now) adult interviewees.

Commenting on a disturbing trend in the Children's Court, the Senior Magistrate referred to the increasing numbers of sexual abuse cases, 'mostly committed against girls, often by family member and friends'. (The Age 25 July 1990) Studies of youth in youth housing programs show they are often the victims of sexual abuse and that staff are often untrained in dealing with the victims of abuse (Morgan and Vincent, 1987, 23). Alder and Sandor (1989) in interviews with homeless young people also found they referred frequently to sexual harassment and assault in youth hostels and refuges.

Sexual abuse is often a precursor to young female victims leaving home, as verified by the Salvation Army report 'Forced Exit', (Hirst, 1989) which found that 43 percent of the females in the study left home because of sexual abuse. Such young women are often left with no means of support as through fear, shame or lack of information, they do not apply for the Young Homeless Allowance and some do not report familial sexual abuse because of fears of being institutionalised or made a state ward. (Hartley and Maas 1988, 37).

Community Services Victoria (1991, 21) noted that 'a very high percentage of young women entering or using CSV services have been sexually abused'. Morgan and Vincent (1987, 23) note that '(S)exual abuse and incest invariably lead to questioning of sexual standards and one's own sexual behaviour'. These comments point to the need for specialist services to counsel and support young women who have been abused. However, given cuts to the welfare sector and the current recession - such services are frequently lacking. The recent Community Services Victoria report (1991, 8) notes the lack of psychiatric services for young women and the need for a better network of services to meet young women's needs.

An additional concern is to provide accommodation for homeless young women that is safe and caters for their particular needs. The Burdekin Report (1989) noted that accommodation options for girls and young women are



more problematic than those for boys, and the inquiry heard evidence of the shortage of accommodation options for young women. A study by Alder and Saudor (1989) found that young women (76%) are more likely than young men (29%) to report being sexually assaulted since leaving home. Similarly, a study of the Young Women's Housing collective (1991, 27) found that young women in mixed gender refuges complained of sexist behaviour and threats posed by male residents, with crimes, 'stretching from harassment, to theft, to rape'.

### **3. Background of Family Crisis**

Workers agreed that involvement in prostitution is often one of a series of behaviours precipitated by family conflict, rejection or crisis. The emotional needs of many young people are not being met within their family setting.

"Rejection is the really big issue and extremely common in rich backgrounds". (Youth Worker Interview). The example was given of 'Peter' whose mother died at the age of 8, all the kids were placed in foster care. His father re-married and eventually brought all the children home, except 'Peter', who was not taken home until he was 13. He felt rejected and did not get along with his stepmother and at 15, he was living in squatts and prostituting for money. Street workers highlighted physical and emotional maltreatment as the big issues for the youth they deal with.

Various reports recognise that compared with young men, young women are more likely to be the victims of sexual abuse at home and that this may be a more important reason than economic pressures for them leaving home. (Higgins, 1991; Alder and Sandor, 1989; Burdekin, 1989)

### **4. Lack of Income Security**

In the majority of cases the chief motivation for prostitution is financial or to secure accommodation or drugs.

Street Workers commented that the majority of kids on the street have no income (even those eligible for Social Security). The reasons included:

- long periods of time before payments came through
- lack of accepted I.D. because youth are too young to drive, don't attend school and have no money for a bank account.
- youth's apprehension about form filling and lack of education.
- youth's mobility and lack of a permanent address.
- mistrust of 'the system' by those who have been on the street since 13, by the time they are 16 and become eligible for the job search allowance.
- some kids have a very strong work ethic and do not want to identify with the category of 'unemployed'.

Lack of income security remains a pressing issue which often precludes participation in re-training and vocational programs. As Ms Varose stated at the Youth Jobless Summit:

'we must stress that without a living income and enough for food and clothing ..... young people can't possibly participate in any of the job creation strategies or the education and training strategies that may come out of this Summit". (The Age, July 23, 1992, 6).

The harsh and difficult eligibility criteria of the Young Homeless Allowance make it unobtainable for many youth. Criticisms include the need to widen eligibility criteria, abolish the 6 week waiting period, broaden sources of support evidence and to add a free income zone. The allowance is below the poverty line and precludes financial support from family. (Mass and Hartley, 1988, 75). A 1987 assessment of the Youth Housing Allowance 'showed the plight of some young people who, for a variety of reasons, are not living at home and who are without money, employment, support or the resources to make any immediate improvement in their position a reality'. (Hartley and

Mass, 1988, 34) The links between family conflict and break-up and homelessness have been recognised, but government has been criticised for its inadequate response and the depletion of family counselling and support services.

The number of single parent families has increased from around 150,000 in the mid 1970's to around 450,000 to 500,00 in the mid 1980's. Burdekin, the Federal Human Rights Commissioner, estimates that about 25 percent of homeless children come from single parent families and 40 percent come from blended families. He argues that vulnerable groups find themselves with less support than previously and questions the adequacy of services provided by the state given the high proportion of homeless children who are state wards; simultaneously living on the streets and in the care of the state (Burdekin, 1989).

The links between family conflict and or unemployment as precursors to homelessness are well documented in recent studies. (Victorian Consultative Committee on social Development 1979, Carmody 1980, National committee for the Evaluation of Youth Services Scheme 1982). In one study, of youth seeking accommodation at youth shelters, 44 percent reported family conflict and 30 percent reported family break-down. The same study found that young people often return to the family home several times only to leave again because of conflicts and or to seek independent living. (Hancock and Burke 1983:17)

Relating to services aimed at preventing homelessness, a report on the Victorian Government's Family Support Program found that resources for family and financial counselling programs were inadequate. (The Age, May, 1990,19). Given the parlous state of Victoria's finances, further cuts to welfare expenditure militate against adequate counselling and family support service levels.

## **5. Homelessness and Lack of Adequate housing**

Homelessness is interrelated with young peoples' housing market inaccessibility for young people and income security considerations. Maas and Hartley refer to youth as a 'newly disadvantaged' group 'caught in the squeeze of high unemployment levels and the scarcity of cheap housing' ..... and the 'trap of inadequate income'. (Maas and Hartley, 1988, 17-18)

Allowances and benefits paid to youth assume family financial support which is often lacking. (Trethaway and Burston, 1989, 48). However, lack of adequate housing is not confined to the unemployed. Institute of Family Studies research which surveyed 120 employed and unemployed youth aged 16 to 19 on income and expenditure patterns, found that half of the young people who were living away from their parents had incomes well below the poverty line'. (The Age, 20 September 1989)

Similar problems confront unemployed youth still living at home, but from low income households. A Brotherhood of St. Lawrence Study of unemployed youth found that maintaining a dependent 15 year old who is unemployed resulted in less income to the household than if the young person attended school. In low income households, the impact of youth unemployment and the loss of contribution to the household, is substantial. Also, changes in government policy such as the Job Search Allowance waiting period, eligibility requirements and reduced levels of benefits affect the ability of low income households to cope and to support teenage children. The major effect of increased financial hardship is increased family conflict, which may result in the young person leaving home. (Trethaway and Burston, 1989, 48).

Housing market shortages in cities in the lower price ranges, loss of housing stock traditionally used by youth, young peoples' inability to afford market rentals, deposits and other fees have created a housing crisis for youth.

Recent reports also criticise young women's limited access to emergency and longer term housing, the narrow range of options available to those without family supports and the rigidity of rules in refuges. (Young Women's Housing Collective) In interviews with homeless youth, Alder and Sandor (1989) found that of 52 percent of young people who reported being sexually assaulted since leaving home, 70 percent were young women and the site of these assaults was often an accommodation service. Thus it appears that services set up to support young people at risk or in crisis, may be the location of exposure to further risk.

## **6. Distinctive Patterns of Work among Youth Involved in Prostitution**

One of the misnomers about youth prostitution is the categorisation of 'working' in prostitution when few consistently prostitute and most do it intermittently, when they need the money.

One distinct group or category of young people are extremely mobile. Used to living and surviving on the streets from as early as 12 years old, they travel between states and go through stages where they are not working on the street. This group is more visible and these young people often have on-going contact with police and street youth workers.

Police and youth workers were unanimous in the opinion that many younger kids work not on the streets but in suburban homes and around railway stations. Although the extent of such practices is unknown, young people's involvement in prostitution may therefore be higher than studies based on more visible prostitution would suggest. However, studies of adult sex workers indicate that the average age of women taking up prostitution is in their mid 20s (Neave 1985). So either the numbers involved may not be substantial and/or such youth may not continue sex work into adulthood. In her interviews with adult workers, Perkins (1991, 257-258) found that less than 5 percent of her sample took up prostitution in early adolescence before

the age of 15, 27 percent took it up at age 16 to 18 and that most took up prostitution later. Perkins found that the popular belief that women become prostitutes in their adolescent years is not strongly supported by the evidence."

Youth Workers commented that the process of young people taking up prostitution is often gradual rather than a sudden leap onto the streets. Typically they are introduced slowly to the scene, possibly starting in the suburbs before coming to St. Kilda. However, there were examples where girls met another worker and were quickly introduced to prostitution.

### **7. The Greater Frequency of Prostitution among Young Females than Males.**

Youth workers and police agreed that involvement in prostitution is more frequent amongst young females than males. This is born out by the finding that of those young people in the sample identified by police, 42 were female and 27 were male. This is quite opposite to the overall dominance of males processed by police - 82 percent of all offenders for whom forms 276 were completed in 1989. Compared with the 1985 study, workers commented that male prostitution is more frequent or more visible and the beats pretty well established. This may explain the increased proportion of males in the 1989 study, compared with 1984.

Workers estimated that about 50 boys would work at prostitution around St Kilda at one time or another throughout the year. They are mainly aged around 15 and more rarely 13 or 14.

Workers commented that some boys are often staunchly vocal about their heterosexuality and are sensitive to the fact that they are working as prostitutes, due to the stigma of homosexuality. Others identify as homosexuals and do the rounds of other states.

Despite any differences in work patterns and frequency of involvement, male and female youth are involved in prostitution for the same reasons; a desperation for money and as 'one of a number of destructive activities turned to because of low self esteem and past rejection'. (Youth worker interview).

Explaining the low numbers at Turana Youth Training Centre, comment was made by Turana youth workers interviewed that they could think of few relevant to the sample.

One reason for this however, might be the comment that it is not within Turana's role to go into the nitty gritty of the boy's backgrounds. There were also doubts about their involvement in prostitution because of the stigma attached to homosexuality in male heterosexual culture. Nor does the link between prostitution and AIDS make seeking out this information relevant as 'we treat all boys as potential AIDS carriers'.

Similarly at Baltara, (catering for boys 10 to 13) youth workers estimated they would see 3 or 4 boys in a year who have been involved in exploitative sexual exchanges or less frequently, in prostitution. However, workers could only recall the name of one. Workers said these boys gravitate towards railway stations and 'the usual pickup points'. 'They are usually runaways looking for a bed for the night and money; and are very open to exploitation.'

Pimping is more subtle in females' relationships because the girls' 'boyfriend', rather than a stranger or boss may live off her earnings and 'protect' her while she works. Youth workers said these guys are often only a few years older than the girl and often expect her to keep working to support one or two drug habits as part of the relationship. This makes these relationships more difficult to separate from 'normal' heterosexual relationships and points to complex issues concerning exploitation or procurement.

In comparison, boys' exploitative relationships may be easier to define as boys tend to be more prone to exploitation by older males who take them away with them and provide money, clothes, accommodation or drugs in exchange for sexual services.

## **8. Involvement in Drug Use**

Winlton sources argued there was not the same problem with drugs as 3 or 4 years earlier when kids used to have syringes and be high more often. They suggested that perhaps refuges and youth work agencies are attempting to keep such problems out of the criminal justice system.

Youth workers commented that St. Kilda is not the centre of drug use it used to be. Drug use amongst youth is now more dispersed throughout the metropolitan area. Street work project workers commented that drug use is common amongst their client groups but that pills (speed and prescription drugs) combined with alcohol are the most common and are often used 'as an anaesthetic'.

A substantial proportion of the sample (20% or 104) were involved in taking narcotics, and a further 10 percent with prescription drugs and 12 percent with amphetamines. Consistent with this finding, the Women's Co-Ordination Unit, 1986, (cited in Community Services Victoria, 1992,4) found that young women react to stress in self-destructive ways, whereas young men are more likely to externalise their problems through aggressive behaviour.

Many of these young people participate in a lifestyle which encourages experimentation with drugs. It appears that a significant sub-group support their drug use through prostitution and reportedly, property crime.



## 7. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS and CONCLUSIONS

### **The sample of 104 young people involved in prostitution.**

- There has been a **decrease** of about 38 percent in the absolute number of young people involved in prostitution, in 1984 (104 youth) compared with 169 in 1984 (Hancock 1985).
- Compared with 1984, there has been an increase in the proportion of **young males** in the sample (from 14% in 1984, to 30% in 1989).
- In terms of **age**, the 1984 and 1989 samples are approximately the same, with a concentration in the 15-17 year age groups (about 76%)
- In terms of **drugs** - a significant proportion of youth (51%) was involved with drugs in 1989, often in combinations. Of those involved in drugs, 40 percent were involved in using narcotics. (Given the high proportion for whom drug use was not known, this proportion is likely to be an underestimate, but is slightly lower than in the 1984 study.) Of those involved in using drugs, 23% (all females) used amphetamines and 19% used prescription drugs; often in combinations or 'cocktails'.
- About half the sample (52%) of 104 was involved in acts of **illegal prostitution** (acts such as soliciting or loitering, that are illegal for adults, or under age work in escort agencies or brothels).
- About half (48%) were involved in prostitution for goods/services, or in exchange for accommodation, broadly conceived as child exploitation.
- About one quarter (27%) of the sample of 104 **came to police or agency notice** as a consequence of or in the conduct of explicit prostitution. A further quarter (28%) came to notice as victims of child exploitation (by employers, or as a consequence of trading sex for accommodation) or being at large, in the streets; after which it subsequently became known that the young person was involved in prostitution.

## **Data on adult sexual exploitation of young people.**

A search of community based orders and custodial terms for convictions on prostitution-related child exploitation/sex offences showed no clear convictions. Given the way that offences are recorded, there was insufficient detail to ascertain the extent to which adults were prosecuted and convicted for prostitution - related child exploitation offences.

Similarly, records of the Child Exploitation Squad were more concerned with paedophiles, although three relevant cases came to light of men providing accommodation or videos and alcohol to (often homeless) youth in exchange for sex.

**The decline in the number of young people involved in prostitution** identified by agencies included in the study, was the most striking finding of the study and one that was not expected on the basis of escalating homelessness and unemployment experienced by young people. In an era characterised by worsening economic opportunities for youth, and given the well established economic motivation for much prostitution (Perkins (1991), Perkins and Bennet 1985, White, 1989), the opposite might have been expected.

This decline may disguise a change in youths' visibility to police and youth workers. After the Neave Report, structural changes to the industry resulted in sex workers moving to less visible forms of work, in escort agencies and brothels, in a geographically more dispersed industry. Young people may have been just as involved in prostitution as five years earlier, but be less visible.

The decline in numbers however, may reflect changes in police and youth agency responses to young people, improvements to homeless youths' access to basic accommodation and food (as part of services under the Supported

Accommodation program) and diversionary attempts to keep youth off the streets in the city and St. Kilda, where street prostitution is most visible.

These changes include:

- Young people who would formerly have been picked up on the streets by police and made wards may now be routinely contacted by programs such as the Street Workers Project and provided with referral and support aimed at preventing homelessness and prostitution. Alternatively, youth picked up by police are routinely returned to their own region, so their chances of settling into the street scene are lessened. However, it is unknown what services are then offered and the extent to which young people 'at risk' or in crisis are supported by state agencies or welfare services.
  
- Comparing the mid-1980s with the late 1980s early '90s, a youth worker criticised for prolonging young peoples' stay in the St. Kilda area has left. It was argued by many that this service at the time encouraged young people into the area by supporting them, when otherwise they would not have stayed or would have found it hard to survive unassisted.
  
- Police argue there are fewer kids evident on the streets compared with the mid- 1980s. Because they know established street workers, a 'new face' stands out. Police maintain a practice of moving kids out of the area back to their families or agencies in their own communities. This may reduce the risk of young people entering into an inner city street culture which may include prostitution.
  
- Improvements to the services available to homeless young people, such as the Supported Accommodation Program may have reduced youths' need to engage in prostitution in exchange for the basics of survival such as food or housing. Thus, while economic recession and worsening unemployment for youth may be manifested in increases in homelessness, improved services for this group in relation to housing may have reduced the number engaging in prostitution

for shelter, although as this study found, such exploitation is still experienced by some youth.

- Community Policing Squads in the inner city described their increased emphasis on case follow-up and supporting families with a view to preventing conflict that might lead to youth being at risk. Some have developed methods for auditing and reviewing regular checks of cases needing follow-up and discussed diffusing family conflict, helping families resolve conflict and referral to other agencies as priorities. Some mentioned their emphasis on following a problem to 'the satisfaction of the client'. It was argued that improved support and follow up of families in conflict might circumvent the problems of family break-up, alienation, poverty, low self esteem and possibly prostitution that often attend young people leaving home and losing the support of their families. However, much of this follow-up depends on adequate resourcing of Community Policing Squads and a network of adolescent and family support services for referrals. It is not known to what extent young people identified through police case book entries have any further follow up or assistance from police or welfare support agencies.

- Some inner city police say they rarely deal with young people because of the high number of welfare agencies in the area. Some are so preoccupied with reactive police work that time for proactive or preventative work is limited.

- The establishment of inner city youth support services (such as the Street Workers Project established in 1984) have most likely had an impact on reducing young peoples' involvement in prostitution by trying to provide alternative opportunities and means of support for young people. Early intervention and referral are seen as means of circumventing young peoples' institutionalisation within the Criminal Justice System. Nevertheless, the Streetworkers Project had statutory clients forming over half its client load between April and September 1989, and many ex-statutory clients, thus

indicating the importance of such agencies in providing support for discharged wards who still have many problems to deal with.

-A predicted outcome of the changed grounds for admission to warship following implementation in September 1991 of relevant sections of the Children and Young Persons Act 1989, is that fewer adolescents will enter the statutory system and that the majority (63%) of those no longer subject to protection orders will be young women under 18 years. (Gogorosis, 1991 cited in Community Services Victoria, 1991, 11). However this does not mean the problems experienced by these young people miraculously disappear. Especially of concern is the high proportion of the sample (48% of these young people) involved in prostitution identified with exploitative circumstances (such as young people-especially young women-exchanging sex for a bed for the night).

This report concluded with discussion of key themes which are relevant to policy responses relating to young people and prostitution. These are:

1. the diversity of young people involved in prostitution;
2. backgrounds or experience of sexual abuse;
3. backgrounds of family crisis;
4. lack of income security;
5. homelessness and lack of adequate housing;
6. distinctive patterns of work of youth involved in prostitution;
7. the greater frequency of prostitution among young females than males
8. drug use.

With the reduction in statutory intervention under the Children and Young Person Act, the voluntary sector is arguing there will be considerably more strain on voluntary agencies to deal with young people who would previously have been a statutory responsibility. Whether there is a shift in financial allocation to cope with these changes is a contested issue (Green, 1993).

Previous studies have been critical of the range of alternatives available to young women deemed to be 'at risk'. (Deinstitutionalisation Working Party, circa 1986, 11) A recent Community Services Victoria report notes that 'alternative and appropriate services' are needed to address the needs of this group. (Community Services Victoria, 1991, 11)

H&CSV Regions will work with the funded sector in planning and implementing enhanced service delivery for young women who are no longer the subject of statutory orders, to ensure that these young women are able to access services which will adequately meet their needs' (Community Services Victoria, 1991, 24).

Presumably, monitoring of these services will be included in the Department's evaluation of the impact of the Act, to be co-ordinated by the Project Director, Children and Young Persons Act Implementation. It would appear that adequately meeting the needs of young people at risk and in crisis will demand that funds saved through de-institutionalisation and non-intervention will be re-channelled into appropriate services for children and young people who are at risk; whether they are statutory or non-statutory clients.

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