

gough conducted the following written interview with Hannah - a Sex Worker based in Queensland.

1. Why become a Sex Worker?

I was actually an exotic dancer (stripper) before I made the leap into sex work so the adult industry, I was already familiar with. I like that with sex work you are only exposed to one person at a time whereas, with stripping it was hundreds of people viewing my body which if I'm honest was uncomfortable. I like the freedom being a sex worker provides as I'm able to work whenever I choose, start/finish my shift whenever I feel and it's allowed me to pursue my studies in criminology and devote a lot of time to other areas of my life, such as family. Oh, and because the money isn't so bad, I haven't had to eat two-minute noodles as a student.

2. Why did you not feel comfortable coming into the studio and doing an audio recording and having a promotional photo taken?

Firstly, I live a very private life, it's obvious that there is a huge stigma attached to being a sex worker which means nobody knows what I really do in my personal life. I would prefer to keep it that way.

3. Why do you believe there is such a negative stigma around sex work?

The influence and portrayal the media has given the industry play a huge role in the way society views sex work and sex workers. I don't think I've ever seen sex work, or a sex worker positively portrayed by the media. The media's idea of being a sex worker I also believe is heavily influenced by America where brothels are illegal, except for the famous bunny ranch in Nevada, so street hooking is their norm where unfortunately it would seem the women who carry out the work are under the control of their pimps and would be more prone to being exposed to unsafe working conditions. In Australia where brothels are legal, the women work within a safe and secure environment where the use of protection is enforced by law. The use of drugs on the

premises is strictly prohibited both by workers and clients, as well as the consumption of alcohol. I should also note I am strictly speaking for the state of Queensland and myself, I've always held the belief that if you require the use of drugs and alcohol to work then you shouldn't be working in the industry in the first place.

4. What can be done to reduce the negative stigma around sex work?

Currently, in Queensland, there is a great organization called Respect and they aim to bring about more equality between sex workers and society, regarding social status. I would suggest you contact the organization because I'm sure they would love to spread their message on your podcast, this would raise greater public awareness and assist in breaking down the stigma around sex work. Aside from Respect, holding conversations, and normalizing sex work as legitimate work is a great place to start.

5. Have you ever told any friends and/or family about your job and if so, what were their reactions?

Nobody knows about the work I do.

6. You have and have had many clients with disabilities, why do they want to see you?

I see many clients with disabilities, and they've become my regular clientele. I think they like to see me because I make them feel seen and heard in their experience, I listen without judgment and see them like any other human being seeking to meet a basic need.

7. What have you learned about disability through your job as a sex worker?

Despite whatever physical or mental barrier, an individual has we all seek that basic need of physical touch. Individuals with disabilities are just as deserving of intimacy and pleasure as those without.

8. What are some of the main reasons people seek your services?

I'm down to earth and I'll always treat a person kindly. I like to listen to people's stories and share a laugh with them. I think these qualities put people at ease when they come into the brothel because usually, they may be nervous otherwise.

9. Do you enjoy your work?

I enjoy it, it's certainly never boring. There are times however when clients have come in and are disrespectful to the women working and that is a side of the work I don't enjoy. Thankfully disrespect towards the women working is not tolerated and they are removed from the premises.

10. Have you ever felt unsafe or afraid while working?

Personally, I've never felt unsafe and have always felt protected. In each room, there is a distress alarm that is easily accessible to us and we have security on premises at all times. I've always done mixed martial arts for the past ten years to ensure my own personal safety if need be.

11. Sex work was recently made legal in Victoria, while it is "mostly" legal in Queensland, there are still some restrictions, what would you say to politicians to make sex work 100% legal?

I would show them the current legal framework of operation in Queensland, areas where it can be improved and adapted to a nationwide legal operation. I would also suggest that by making sex work 100% legal that the safety of doing such work has increased as women aren't participating in risky work environments with little to no security.

12. What are some of the more unusual requests you have received?

I do seem to attract the more unusual requests but again, I think this is because clients generally feel at ease with me, they feel they can just be themselves. Some of these requests vary from clients dressing up as their favourite movie character and role-playing, think Captain Jack Sparrow for instance. Then there are clients who request W.A.M (wet and messy). It's not at all what you think either! Usually, W.A.M involves cakes/pies/jelly/custard and essentially, I cover my clients in the requested substance. I guess the most unusual request I have ever had was to just watch two best friends make out/make love, initially they wanted to partake in a threesome with myself but ended up falling in love with each other (these guys are now married I'm happy to report!). I guess they just needed somebody to hold their hands LOL.

13. Sexually speaking, do you have limits, things you will not do?

For obvious reasons, we all have sexual limits. Sexually my limits are any act that makes me feel degraded or uncomfortable, I always talk to clients before we go into the room, so my boundaries are clear to them. For example, one of my limits is a strict policy on not providing anal services, it's not something I enjoy, simple as that. I also don't allow for any bodily fluids to be placed onto my body, not only would that make me feel dirty, but it places my health at risk if a client has an infection/disease I'm unaware of.

14. Tell us about some of the boundaries you have with clients, so things don't cross a line to where you feel uncomfortable.

Boundaries are always laid out before a booking begins.

For example, a client is not to pull my hair or push my head down onto them.

Clients are to talk respectfully to me and communicate their own needs with me so that way we both are on the same page. It shouldn't have to be a guessing game for me, right?

Clients are made aware I can cease a booking at any time if they cross a boundary I've set.

15. Do you feel your job is a necessary part of society?

I would say it is. Whether people like it or not sex plays a major role in society, its role is multifold - it affects everything as sex can be viewed as a mode of expression. My job allows people to seek expression instead of repression.

Sex is used to sell everything from happiness to social inclusion, so my job provides individuals with the most basic human needs, such as inclusion.

Sex is associated with some of the strongest rewards the brain has to offer, think dopamine and serotonin. My job as a sex worker serves to improve the overall quality of life of those who seek my services.

Since the role of sex also contributes greatly to gender ideals surrounding gender 'norms', roles, and relationships between men, women, and those who identify otherwise then my job could also be viewed as contributing to greater equality of experiences amongst the sexes within society.

16. What do you get out of this job? Why continue to do it?

Honestly, I get the freedom of expression, time, and choice. I can brighten people's days and I continue to do it because of that, I like seeing people freely express themselves and the happiness this brings.

17. Do you have a sense of humour about your job?

I would say I certainly do; I carry a dark and twisted sense of humour with me at all times. It's hard to explain how I have a sense of humour with my job, it's just a natural occurrence. You've just got to laugh at some of the situations you come across, I guess.

18. I am sure there are times when you are "not in the mood" how do you get past those feelings so you can do your job successfully?

I think of some poor student out there surviving on two-minute noodles (there you go I've answered the humour question above!). Honestly, I've never been 'in the mood' sexually for this job, I save being in the mood for my personal sexual experiences on the outside. I don't like to mix work with pleasure so to speak, it's a business transaction after all. Mentally when I don't feel like performing, I think of my future goals and dreams and that always gets me through, there's always a higher purpose to what I do.

19. What are your goals for the future?

In two years, I'll be graduating with a master's in criminology, there are many exciting opportunities for me here so I'm very fortunate. I've always wanted to write a book on my experiences as a sex worker so that is also bouncing around in the back of my mind but my main goal for the future is just doing what makes me feel happy and content in life.

20. If you could give a message to people about sex work and sex workers, what would it be?

We are humans just like you, we walk alongside you, and most times you're unaware.

Some of us are just trying to provide a better life for our children/our parents/our family, etc. Some of us are your future teachers, engineers, lawyers, social workers, psychologists, or tradeswomen.

What we do as sex workers is at times provide a missing link in a person's life, they mightn't otherwise have access to without us.

As sex workers, we provide a place free of shame, guilt, and judgment, and all we ask in return from society is if we could receive the same in return, to be free from being shamed and judged for the work we carry out, to be viewed as socially equal in status because we are.