

South Korean women found working unlawfully as prostitutes

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Three South Korean women have been found to be working unlawfully as prostitutes in a central Auckland apartment.

Immigration New Zealand confirmed yesterday that the sex workers, including one who had passed a secret note to a client seeking help, were on temporary visas.

Agency spokesman Marc Piercey said no decision has been made yet on what action will be taken against the women or the brothel operator.

Police yesterday again interviewed the client, who claimed the prostitute he had visited at the Union Street apartment passed him the note written in Korean ethnic script on a yellow Post-it note that said: "Help me! I want to go back to Korea."

Police spokeswoman Tracie Simpson said police had concerns over the validity of the man's claims and was considering whether there was sufficient evidence to charge him due to the integrity of his allegations.

"Police have now spoken to two women and are comfortable that there is no risk to their safety. The woman who was the subject of the original allegations has left the country of her own volition, Ms Simpson said.

"Auckland City Police can now confirm that there will be no further police enquiries into allegations of Korean sex workers being held against their will in the city."

In the last year, China nationals made up the highest number of prostitutes found working unlawfully in New Zealand followed by those from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

Under the Prostitution Reform Act 2003, only New Zealand citizens and residents can work in the sex industry.

Of the 42 foreign nationals on temporary visas found working as sex workers in the last 12 months, 18 came from China, 14 from Hong Kong, three from Taiwan and one each from Malaysia, Thailand, Fiji, France, Japan, Brazil and South Korea.

Mr Piercey said immigration officers visited hundreds of places of employment, including brothels, each year.

He said the agency's records did not capture the number of temporary visa holders working in the sex industry located by police, who also undertook work in this area.

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