

'It is always a problem'

HUMAN TRAFFICKING THREAT TO CUP

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With the World Cup a kick-off away, there is heightened vigilance as hotels and the City's specialised units gear up to curb human trafficking in Cape Town.

Several city hotels, including Winchester Mansions in Sea Point, signed the Tourism Child-Protection Code, which was launched by the Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA) and Cape Town Tourism on Wednesday June 9, that will see staff trained to identify possible cases where children are in danger.

The tourism industry does not condone sex tourism and human trafficking, said Cape Town Tourism chief executive Mariette du Toit-Helmbold. In a statement Ms Du-Toit Helmbold said there was a "dark underbelly in tourism, whether we like it or not" that needed to be exposed and proactively dealt with.

"When people travel, with the intention of exploiting women and children, it becomes a matter of interest not just for tourism but also for society and the law. Exploitation of this sort is a global problem, but it often goes hand in hand with developing societies such as ours and should be a concern for anyone involved in the tourism industry. Our message is simple: If you are going to make yourself guilty of irresponsible behaviour, you are not welcome."



Mayco member for Safety and Security, Alderman JP Smith, said that during the World Cup the Vice Squad together with the police, who all formed part of the integrated safety and security plan, wanted to ensure that the city was safe for locals and tourists.

Mr Smith said that a decision was made not to allocate more resources to the Vice Squad during the World Cup but they will continue to watch out for the "threat" of human trafficking as well as child prostitution, which is "always a problem" and raid illegal brothels.

He said the Vice Squad and other security roleplayers have to ensure that the children who come to the Public Viewing Areas are safe and not "preyed on by predators".

Mr Smith said there are no brothels in the City Bowl and Atlantic Seaboard as the last one in Sea Point closed down a few months ago.

Mr Smith said there are fewer prostitutes standing on the streets but there has been an increase in brothels particularly in the Tableview, Bellville and Boston areas.

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Businesses sign anti-trafficking code

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Mr Smith said the Vice Squad was keeping a "careful hand" on the rent boys, the male prostitutes on the Sea Point beachfront.

He said there were a few prostitutes standing on the streets at Boundary Road in Green Point, which was the dividing line between the jurisdiction of Sea Point and Cape Town Central police stations.

Mr Smith said out of the 398 prostitutes profiled since the Vice Squad was launched last year, only 6% were foreigners, of which nine cases could be classified as human trafficking.

Most recently the City's Vice Squad and Table View police arrested a brothel owner on Monday June 7 who had a 17-year-old girl working for him.

Neil Arendse of Specialised Law Enforcement Services said the owner was charged with the "selling of sex and trafficking in persons for sexual purposes" under the Sexual Offences Act.

Mr Arendse said children were definitely at risk during the World Cup and urged parents to be more vigilant.

"Parents need to be extremely vigilant when attending big events and need to ensure that their children are supervised at all times," Mr Arendse said.

The code, introduced by FTTSA, requires the approximately 10 establishments across the city to

- Establish an ethical corporate policy regarding commercial sexual exploitation of children

- Provide information and help centre details to key people at the tourist destination as well as to travellers

- Introduce clauses in supplier contracts, stating a common allegiance against the exploitation of minors

- Report annually on incidents and progress.

Coral International Hotel signed the

code and general manager Jacqui Booyzen said: "We are committed to responsible tourism and tourism that is not harmful to our local community or the people of South Africa, but that contributes to job creation and a better life for all in the country."

The hotel was currently working on an internal policy that included staff awareness and education about human trafficking, aimed at empowering them to act responsibly whenever the need arises and to be able to identify incidents and what to do in such cases, said Ms Booyzen.

City Sightseeing chief executive Claus Tworeck said the tour bus company also signed the code. "It is a matter near and dear to our company's heart and so we had no hesitation in signing this code of conduct as it falls in line with our own company's philosophy," he said.

Mr Tworeck said staff training will commence this week, which is part of the longer term strategy. "Our drivers and guides are ambassadors for Cape Town, and so, are our eyes and ears as they drive through the city," said Mr Tworeck.

Mr Smith said tip-offs about brothels, child prostitution and human trafficking often came from the community.

He said based on the illegal brothels that were raided, the women were often Chinese and Thai and from southern African countries, such as Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Mr Smith said, based on the Vice Squad's cases, statistics of 40 000 or so human trafficking incidents in a year, which are quoted by some organisations were "irresponsible" and "alarmist".

"There are human trafficking cases but they (statistics) are comparatively low," said Mr Smith.

Mr Smith said the Vice Squad was working closely with the police to keep an eye on these concerns.

