



Sydney's illegal brothel battle February 12, 2012 12:00AM

FED-UP Sydney councils say the war against illegal vice dens is costing them a six-figure fortune and have called for tougher government control.

Bankstown Mayor Khal Asfour said the council had spent \$20,000 a year since 2007 investigating and prosecuting illegal or suspected brothels in the area.

"Bankstown City Council has zero tolerance for unauthorised brothels and will do whatever is necessary to ensure our city remains a safe and great place to live, work and raise a family," he said.

"The state government should provide more resources to local government to tackle the problem of illegal brothels."

Since 2007, the council has shut down 14 illegal brothels, at an expense of \$7000 per premises. Several councils have spent \$100,000 each paying private investigators to sleep with prostitutes.

Willoughby City Council spent \$5500 on private investigators to look into 23 suspected illegal brothels in the past year alone, with 16 closed as a result of investigations.

One case, involving Oriana Bath House in Chatswood, proceeded to a full hearing in the Land and Environment Court, which was won, but most other matters were resolved without a court hearing.

The City of Sydney Council has spent \$25,000 since 2007 employing private detectives to investigate brothels and swingers clubs, with 63 investigations and eight operators hauled before the courts.

Blacktown Council has spent \$2000 in the past five years investigating 12 suspected brothels and had five matters listed with the Land and Environment Court.

Warren Mallard, the managing director of Lyonswood Investigations and Forensic Group, which specialises in the investigation of brothels, said work commissioned by councils had increased by 30 per cent in the past five years.

- *Caroline Marus*