

2 December 2020

To the Joint Select Committee on the Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020

**RE: Anti-Discrimination Amendment (Religious Freedoms and Equality) Bill 2020 (NSW)**

Questions on Notice:

What is the link between women's experiences of coercive control and whether they are more likely to receive pressure for an abortion as opposed to becoming pregnant (reproductive coercion).

'I am seeking some current Australian evidence on the prevalence and presentations of reproductive coercion? Specifically, the Committee is interested in evidence as to **how prevalent it is for abusive partners to force their victim into having an abortion, compared to how prevalent it is for abusive partners to force or coerce their victim to become pregnant**- e.g. through forced sex, stealthing, tampering with or denying access to contraceptives or reproductive health care etc.'

- A gap in existing data is that the Personal Safety Survey does not encompass non-physical reproductive coercion that could be enacted by an intimate partner. The limited data that is available displays a **troubling trend**. The Our Watch Report outlines a data case study prepared in conjunction with Marie Stopes Australia which demonstrates that in 2018, **32% of counselling clients were living in coercive contexts**. This rate was higher for **ATSI** clients of whom **50% were living in coercive contexts**. A recent analysis from the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health, highlights the **strong association between intimate partner violence and abortions**. Intimate partner violence including coercive and controlling behaviour has a considerable effect on a woman's ability to control her fertility.
- There are certain demographics that are more prone to experiencing this facet of abuse including refugee and migrant women. Studies demonstrate that some refugee and migrant women feel **unable to say no to sex, seek support for their sexual and reproductive health, and exert control over their reproduction**. Another study of **Aboriginal** women living in remote communities found that participants expressed concerns about reproductive coercion especially in regards to **pressure to become pregnant**.
- A total of 965 women and pregnant people accessed pregnancy options counselling at Marie Stopes in 2018. In this data coercive contexts included when a person was pregnant due to sexual violence, when they had a partner who was unsupportive of pregnancy options counselling, and/or who

identified that they were being coerced towards an abortion, adoption or parenting option that they would not choose themselves.

Yours sincerely,



Hayley Foster  
Chief Executive Officer