

MEDIA RELEASE

CHILDREN BY CHOICE COMMENT ON WHITE RIBBON AUSTRALIA RETRACTING THEIR POSITION STATEMENT ON REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

Children by Choice are deeply saddened to learn White Ribbon Australia has retracted its position statement on reproductive rights for women.

Daile Kelleher, Manager of Children by Choice “We are shocked that during such a historic week in Queensland for women’s reproductive rights after the decriminalisation of abortion, that White Ribbon would turn their back on women experiencing reproductive coercion.”

“Children by Choice assisted White Ribbon Australia with the position statement which was released in February 2017 and which recognises that women in domestically violent relationships are likely to be subject to violence and control over their sexual and reproductive health.”

“Reproductive coercion can be inclusive of a wide range of pregnancy controlling behaviours, from emotional manipulation, contraception sabotage (to force a partner into pregnancy, as well as coercion into terminating a pregnancy), to forced sex and rape. Of the almost 1700 clients we speak to in our pregnancy counselling service each year, 35% are experiencing domestic violence and 15% are experiencing reproductive coercion - with 74% of these women being coerced into pregnancy, 26% to abortion.”

“For some women, safely and legally choosing an abortion is part of their safety plan to leave a violent relationship. For WRA to completely ignore this reality of women living with violence and control is deeply upsetting and irresponsible.”

“While we understand it can be an uncomfortable topic for some to discuss the intersection of reproductive coercion, domestic violence, unplanned or forced pregnancy and abortion, this is what many women are faced with. Domestic violence advocacy groups can’t pick and choose the forms of violence against women they are most comfortable supporting’

“By retracting their position statement supporting women living with sexual violence and reproductive coercion White Ribbon Australia have turned their back on vulnerable women. These women not only need the support of local services, but of the community to aid the de-stigmatisation of this issue that will encourage women to access personal and professional support systems.”

Children by Choice is an independent Brisbane-based non-profit organisation, committed to providing unbiased information, counselling and referrals for all unplanned pregnancy options – abortion, adoption and parenting. We also provide sexuality education to young people and professional development training for health and community sector professionals. Founded almost 50 years ago, we work to advance Queenslanders' reproductive choices, and to improve access to safe and legal abortion.

Daile Kelleher is available for media comment

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