

Reproductive Coercion in Australia

Position Statement

Background

Reproductive coercion is when the abuse of power and control reduces a person's reproductive autonomy. In Australia reproductive coercion disproportionately affects women; particularly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women, women with disabilities, young women, women of recent migrant and refugee backgrounds, socially and financially marginalised women, and women living in rural and remote areas.

Access to and information about reproductive autonomy (including abortion) in Australia varies across states and territories. This variation can present a significant hurdle for women in situations of reproductive coercion seeking to regain reproductive autonomy and to maintain their reproductive and sexual health.

There is no routine national data collection on reproductive coercion in Australia. Data must be pieced together from a variety of sources making it difficult to reliably determine national abortion rates and trends. In addition to data gaps, there are significant gaps in the provision of guidelines, education and training, and professional development. Each state and territory has different legal requirements with different levels of complexity.

FPAA's Position

- Reproductive and sexual health services must be legal, safe, accessible and affordable for all people in Australia
- Legislation related to reproductive coercion must be nationally consistent whilst enabling full access and equity in every jurisdiction
- Improved access to reproductive and sexual health services reduces mortality and morbidity as a result of reproductive coercion
- Women must have access to accurate, unbiased information in order to exercise self-determination, enable informed decision-making and management of their health
- Reproductive coercion prevention must be a visible and required component of health professional undergraduate education

FPAA advocates for reproductive coercion prevention in Australia by:

- Advocating for improved access to affordable reproductive and sexual health services, including abortion, especially for the most marginalised women, including provision through the government sector
- Advocating for improved access to comprehensive relationships and sexual health education for young people, including information about contraception and pregnancy choices

- Supporting awareness and education campaigns for women regarding abortion access and options including emergency contraception in conjunction with information about contraceptive choices
- Advocating for inclusion of reproductive coercion within relevant professional training programs
- Supporting professional development and communities of practice for health care professionals preventing reproductive coercion
- Advocating for a national process for consistent and regular data collection on reproductive coercion for the purpose of informing policy, workforce and service development
- Supporting relevant partners and advocates in reproductive coercion prevention activities across Australia where needed
 - Advocating for the development and implementation of nation-wide strategies that increase awareness of reproduction coercion.
 - Supporting increased research around reproductive coercion, and ramifications for victims, to facilitate a greater understanding of this complex issue.

ⁱ Children by Choice (2018), 'Reproductive Coercion Facts and Figures',
<<https://www.childrenbychoice.org.au/factsandfigures/reproductivecoercion>>