

Women's Health NSW & Domestic Violence NSW Statement on White Ribbon Australia's retraction of Reproductive Rights Statement – 19 October 2018

Women's Health NSW is the peak body for 21 NGO Women's Health Centres in NSW. Domestic Violence NSW is the peak for specialist domestic and family violence services representing more than 60 member services across the state. Our members provide trauma-informed health and specialist support services to women who have experienced violence. They have a long history of promoting an understanding of the links between pregnancy and violence against women and have fought hard over decades to ensure that women have access to reproductive rights and bodily autonomy.

Recently, emerging research has brought to light the range of types of reproductive abuse and coercion experienced by women (often as part of a broader pattern of power and control) and has demonstrated inextricable links between reproductive coercion and sexual, domestic and family violence.

When White Ribbon Australia launched its policy position on abortion and access to safe reproductive rights in 2017 our organisations applauded and fully endorsed: *"Respectful relationship education, access to contraception, access to abortion and post-abortion support for women and financial and social support for women who want to continue a pregnancy, these are all choices that women have the right to execute and act on"* Libby Davies, White Ribbon Australia, 2017.

Our position on today's news reports that White Ribbon Australia has withdrawn its Reproductive Rights Statement is that any denigration of unequivocal support for reproductive autonomy suggests a lack of genuine understanding in relation to the experiences and impacts of violence against women at a time when the Australian community is demanding knowledge and progressive change on this issue. We will continue to advocate publically, with government and policymakers for all Australian women to have the support they need to make autonomous choices about their safe reproductive rights.

We will review our relationship with White Ribbon Australia events and will be seeking the views of our members over the next few days. We will make our position clear to White Ribbon Australia and we hope to work constructively with the CEO and Board to create a positive, progressive dialogue on this important issue.