

# Violence Does Not Stop at the Bedroom Door: *Intimate Partner Violence and Reproductive Coercion*

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## Reproductive Coercion

- Interference with reproductive and sexual autonomy
  - Pregnancy Promotion
  - Contraceptive Sabotage
  - Pregnancy Outcome Control



*Before Sexual Intercourse*

*During Sexual Intercourse*

*Post Conception*

Reproductive preferences are ignored or disregarded by her sexual partner through behaviours that prevent effective contraceptive use

## Pregnancy Promotion

- Regardless of intention
- Contraception destroyed
- Vaginal rings taken out
- Intrauterine devices removed
- Medical appointments sabotaged
- Prevent access to Morning After Pill
- Fertility Awareness Methods ignored

Pressured, coerced or forced by their partner to become pregnant against their wishes

## Contraceptive Sabotage and Interference

- Unprotected sex pressure
- Threats
- Monitoring menstrual cycles
- Forced ovulation and pregnancy testing kits
- Monitoring for signs of pregnancy
- Physical or sexual violence

## Intimate Partner Sexual Violence and Sexual Coercion

### Forced sexual activity

Unwanted sexual activity where the victim is pressured, tricked, threatened or forced in a non-physical way

- Pregnancy promotion and contraceptive interference may include forced unprotected penetrative sex
- Elevated risk of serious harm and intimate partner homicide
- Risks of pregnancy as a strategy to prevent her leaving

Control over the outcome of the pregnancy for it to end in their abortion or birth

## Pregnancy Outcome Control

- Threats to kill or harm
  - Shaming her for her decision to terminate
  - Sabotaging her abortion appointment
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- Violence to cause a miscarriage
  - Forced abortion
  - Preventing prenatal care

## Contraception and Sex in Domestic Violence

- DV does not facilitate safe negotiation of contraception or sex
- RC often co-occurs with other violent, controlling behaviours
- Women may “consent” to sex to prevent escalation of physical violence

Reproductive agency

vs.

Loss of safety in  
enforcing reproductive agency

## Coerced Pregnancy and Violence During Pregnancy

- Unintended pregnancy 4x more likely to experience physical violence from a partner
- Adverse pregnancy outcomes associated with physical, sexual or psychological IPV
  - Delayed prenatal care
  - Miscarriage
  - Stillbirth
  - Low birth weight
  - Neonatal death
  - Premature labour



## Why a Better Response to Reproductive Coercion is Needed

- Having children in a DV relationship decreases chances of separation
- Fears for children's safety in his care
- Fears for children's wellbeing from exposure to violence
- Fears children will be used by him to enact revenge on her for leaving
- Barriers of Family Law system

## Screening for Reproductive Coercion

- Is there any chance you could be pregnant?
- How are you feeling about the pregnancy?
- Would you like to discuss your options?
- Are you worried about falling pregnant?
- Are you using contraception?
- How does your partner react to, or influence, your contraceptive choices?
- Would you like some information on your contraceptive options?

- Need to better support women who have decided to end their pregnancy
- Criminalised in Queensland and NSW
  - No legislated rationale, defence or exemption
- Criminalisation impacts on service provision and availability of accurate information
  - Compounded impact on women experiencing domestic violence
- Abortion must be lawful and accessible

**The coercion women experience at the hands of their partner is enough – it does not need to come from the State as well**