

Hidden abortion pressure revealed

Tony Moore

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Seven out of 10 men involved in unwanted pregnancies try to influence women to have abortions, according to a prominent Brisbane pregnancy clinic. A senior counsellor from Pregnancy Counselling Link, which receives up to 3000 calls a year, believes up to 70 per cent of cases involve men pressuring their partners to have terminations.

It is estimated there are about 14,000 abortions in Queensland each year.

"It is a hidden issue because no one is really interested enough to report it," said the counsellor, who asked for her name not to be published.

Family Planning Queensland said it did not keep statistics on this type of issue but doubted the influence was as high.

"I wouldn't have thought it was that high, if the woman has been well supported through the process," said FPQ spokesperson Margot Kingston.

She agreed the decision-making process was complex.

Ms Kingston said organisations providing pregnancy advice had obligations to make sure a woman was providing "informed consent" in any decision.

The Pregnancy Counselling Link counsellor cited one case this week where a man threatened to leave his pregnant partner before joining a former spouse in Tasmania.

"She is now on her own and has another child," she said. "It happens all the time."

Pregnancy Counselling Link counsellors are all required to present the three options to women who call: adoption, termination, or keeping the child.

"Nine times out of 10 they put adoption aside. No one is really interested," the counsellor said.

"With abortion they are interested in that because often they are left as a single parent.

"Because their partner or husband has abandoned them, or has walked out on them for one reason or another, but mainly because of the pregnancy. They are not prepared to be responsible for that."

According to Pregnancy Counselling Link, young men are too often influenced by their friends.

"Even the young ones when they plan them, the woman will ring and say: 'We planned to become pregnant but now he has been out with his mates'," the counsellor said.

"They're saying: 'You're mad, you're mad, you can just walk away and he has'."

FPQ spokesperson Margot Kingston said agencies like FPQ and Children by Choice spent time to make sure a woman was making her own decision.

"About 80 per cent of women have made a choice of what they want to do prior to seeing a health care provider," Ms Kingston said.

Almost half of all unplanned pregnancies in Australia end in a pregnancy termination. One in three Australian women will have an abortion in their lifetime.

Children by Choice telephone counsellor Rhonda, who asked not to have her surname published, said about 50 per cent of callers felt an element of pressure to end the pregnancy from their partner.

Children by Choice receive about 2500 calls a year and say they provide advice from a "feminist perspective".

Rhonda said she did not believe the figure of men influencing women to have abortions was as high as seven out of 10 calls.

"I wouldn't say that coercion and pressure would factor in as highly as the numbers from that service are suggesting," Rhonda said.

"But I am not going to say it doesn't happen that women do not make a decision based on the future status of a relationship.

"I don't know of circumstances where decision-making for a pregnancy termination is a direct result of the man involved in the pregnancy."

According to Children by Choice, the cost of a pregnancy termination before 12 weeks is between \$350 and \$1050.

After 12 weeks the cost rises by about \$100 per week. Clinics may offer a reduced cost for health care cardholders and pensioners.