

Statement

Good Shepherd welcomes dowry abuse inquiry recommendations

14 February 2019

We welcome the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs' report into the practice of dowry and the incidence of dowry abuse in Australia.

The Inquiry came about as a result of strong advocacy from the community, reflected in over 80 submissions being received.

The Committee's report echoes the views from the submissions and three public hearings, which for the first time in Australia shone a light on the abuse and violence that may arise through the exchange of dowry.

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand CEO, Stella Avramopoulos welcomed the report's recommendations.

"The recommendations tabled by the Committee provide considered, practical solutions that will go a long way to increasing the protection available to individuals experiencing dowry abuse.

"I commend the Committee for their non-partisan approach to this Inquiry and look forward to working with government and civil society organisations to implement these recommendations and drive real change."

Throughout the Inquiry Good Shepherd called for the recognition of dowry abuse within the national definition of domestic and family violence, specifically acknowledging it as a form of economic abuse. We have been clear in our submission that we do not believe that the system of dowry itself is exploitative; however, dowry can become exploitative when practised in a way that involves force, fraud, coercion, threats and violence.

“We support an integrated and holistic approach to addressing dowry abuse, and the recommendations in today’s report lay that foundation,” said Ms Avramopoulos.

The true extent of dowry abuse across Australia is unknown; however, the abuse and violence experienced by women is significant, including physical, sexual and psychological violence. It can also include threats in relation to migration, demands to annul or dissolve a marriage and international abandonment.

ENDS.

