

## ANNEX C

### OTHER AMENDMENTS TO WOMEN'S CHARTER

#### **Protection of victims of family violence and professionals engaged in protection work**

The amendments are as follows:

- a) Prohibit the publication of information (i) relating to places of safety to enhance the safety of victims, staff and professionals working with victims; and (ii) on proceedings in camera in certain cases;

Places of safety provide temporary emergency shelter to victims of family violence and their family members, and other individuals in crisis. Victims, staff and professionals working at the places of safety may face threats to their safety, as some perpetrators of violence may try to seek out their victims to harass, intimidate, or harm them.

The new amendment will prohibit any person from publishing or broadcasting any information that would reveal, or is likely to identify a place of safety and its residents (e.g. newspaper, and social media). Those who breach this provision will be liable to a fine.

The amendment will also prohibit the publishing or broadcasting of information on online media, pertaining to Court proceedings in camera in certain cases under the Women's Charter, which may lead to the identification of the woman or girl in the proceedings. This is in addition to the current prohibition to broadcast or publish such information in newspaper reports.

- b) Provide other care options for women and girls in need of protection apart from placing them in places of safety or children's homes; and

Previously, the Director of Social Welfare (DSW) may make orders to place women and girls in need of protection in shelters and children's homes, while the circumstances of the case are being investigated. To provide more community-based care options, the option to commit a woman or girl requiring protection to the care of a suitable "fit individual" has been introduced. A "fit individual" may include a relative or close friend. This will apply for situations where it may not be safe for the woman or girl to stay with her immediate family.

- c) Protect professionals against lawsuits or other legal proceedings in personal capacity for actions taken in good faith when carrying out court orders or statutory responsibilities under Parts VII and XI of the Act.

There was previously no statutory protection in the Women's Charter for professionals (e.g. social workers) against lawsuits or other legal proceedings in their personal capacity when they undertake actions under the Act. The new provision will protect professionals from personal liability when they discharge functions or duties under the Act which were done with reasonable care and in good faith.

- d) Empower married or previously married persons below the age of 21 years to apply for a protection order and expedited order for themselves and specific dependants.

Previously, family violence victims who are below 21 cannot apply for a protection order for themselves. The application can only be made by their guardian, a relative or a person responsible for their care, or by any person appointed by the Minister. The amendment will enable a married or previously married person (i.e. widowed or divorced or whose marriage was declared null and void) below 21 years of age to seek protection against family violence for themselves and their children.

### **Strengthen law enforcement levers to deal with online vice**

In recent years, vice syndicates have taken their business online to widen their reach to clients. Internet-facilitated vice activities at heartlands and private residences affect the public's sense of safety and security. The anonymity provided by the internet also facilitates criminal groups conducting such activities to escape Police's detection. The Bill will create new offences to deal with online vice-related problems:

- a) A new section 146A makes it an offence for a person in Singapore to operate or maintain in Singapore a remote communication service (such as a website) that offers or facilitates the provision by a woman or girl of sexual services in return for payment or reward.
- b) A new section 146(1A) makes it an offence for a person to solicit, receive or agree to receive any gratification as an inducement or reward for providing any service, and who by providing that service does or will aid the prostitution of another person. Persons such as webmasters who demand upfront fees or sexual services in exchange for setting up and operating a website to advertise the services of prostitutes will be liable for this new offence.