

## Economic abuse case studies

For the NSW Parliament Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control

### **“Rose” - Intersection with reproductive coercion and other forms of abuse**

This case is of a woman in her early 20s who was studying at university while she lived with her male partner who was more than 10 years her senior. She worked and paid her own way through this time, although he was becoming more violent and controlling.

Their agreed method of contraception was the withdrawal method and she had told him she never wanted to have kids. When she tried to leave him because of his violence, he wooed her back and when they had sex next, he refused to withdraw. As a result, she became pregnant and her previous experiences and beliefs meant a termination was not an option for her. So she had the child and that was the start of him making her economically dependent.

Her family was dismayed by the pregnancy and felt she had gone against God, so she couldn't turn to them. He was isolating her from her friends who were still more focused on going out and having fun, and she was unable to work because he wouldn't pay for child-care and had the view that she should be home looking after the house and kids.

That act of reproductive coercion led to several years of increasing levels of coercive control including physical, psychological and economic abuse as well as stalking and monitoring. When she got desperate, she went to police, and they said they'd investigate the physical assaults only.

### **“Sophie” - Inadequacy of existing laws and inadequate application of existing laws**

Sophie worked all her life; even as she gave birth and raised children, she kept working.

Despite this seeming independence - her access to money was limited. Her husband was an accountant and controlled everything - so even though her pay would go into her account, he had organised for that to be immediately transferred to an account he controlled. Initially this made sense to her; managing money was his profession after all. But then he would take off for weeks at a time without telling her and without making provisions for her and the kids. On one occasion she had to borrow money from her parents to buy food and nappies.



She says the only time he would let her buy something for herself was when she was going somewhere with him, because he would want her look like (in her words) “a trophy wife”.

He had numerous affairs and told her that was her fault for working too much and for getting fat. She says she couldn't stop working because there never seemed to be enough money.

At one stage, he stopped making payments on the mortgage, the furniture and the car and they were all repossessed. After she left him, she was sued by one of his business partners because she was unknowingly a director of her ex-husband's company.

Sophie says she never had a name for the abuse she experienced until after she'd lived through it.

-ENDS-

*“Rose” and “Sophie” (not their real names) shared their experiences with Insight Exchange to help inform social, service and systemic responses to domestic and family violence. You can read their full narratives in the first person, on the [Voices of Insight](#) section of the [Insight Exchange website](#).*

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