

**Submission
No 32**

COERCIVE CONTROL IN DOMESTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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SUBMISSION to the NSW JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON COERCIVE CONTROL

Introduction

I have been an anti-domestic-abuse campaigner for decades. I am not a lawyer. I am an interested citizen. I have worked “in the field” and have personally experienced domestic abuse. Whilst I welcome this development I have concerns about how it can be *effectively* implemented. Coercive controlling behaviours cover an extremely wide spectrum. The combination of behaviours, the variations, the subtlety and the very slow escalation sneaks up and traps people.

I strongly support the statements:

- it is repeated patterns of behaviour and an interwoven course of conduct carried out over time
- individual acts may appear trivial, whilst forming part of a broader matrix of abusive behaviours.

This is key. The challenge will be drawing “lines in the sand” within this wide spectrum.

- At the “lower” end, a change in perception and social response is required.
- At the “higher” end, a change in interpretation and legal response is required.

It is less a matter of definition and more a matter of setting thresholds.

INQUIRY DISCUSSION PAPER QUESTIONS

1. **What would be an appropriate definition of coercive control?**
2. **How should it distinguish between behaviours that may be present in ordinary relationships with those that taken together form a pattern of abuse?**

Coercive control (cc) is a new term for an old problem. Controlling behaviour by men within intimate relationships is widely considered “normal” within patriarchal society. Therefore, the term “behaviour present in ordinary relationships” grates, as it is used by people like Mark Latham to defend common but inappropriate behaviour by accepting or normalising it. It doesn’t become an “issue” till she starts to realise, or he commits a serious crime. In the interim, victims adjust, respond and develop a wide variety of survival techniques/behaviours, which will also need to be considered in their proper context. Catching victims in occasional, trivial and common retorts, which is usually defensive and which everyone is guilty of from time to time, is not the same as a *sustained pattern* of abuse. Calling out abuse is not abuse. Conflict per se is not abuse. Defending yourself is not abuse. Protesting about abuse is not abuse.

The sheer breadth and commonality of the spectrum of behaviours, and the widespread tolerance of it (from “it was just locker-room banter”, to “he [the man who just slaughtered his family] is really a good bloke”) demonstrates that it is not aberrant but normalised. Is this what you mean by “behaviours of ordinary relationships”?

That any of the cc behaviours are defined as “present in ordinary relationships” is part of the problem. Domestic abuse is pathological behaviour, which has been largely normalised, and because women want relationships with men it is condoned as “part of the deal”. Even overtly aggressive behaviours are normalised and accepted¹ and there is broad community acceptance of many subtle behaviours which are passive-aggressive². How can any behaviour which dismisses a person’s worth or erodes self-esteem and confidence be deemed in any way normal or ordinary?

The media focus on the extreme ends of the spectrum enables people to tell themselves it is aberrant behaviour. But mostly, in current society, it isn’t. The recent Government “Respect women” campaign seeks to “normalise” respect. The very fact that society needs to *convince* many grown men to show respect for women and girls is at the core of this issue.

¹ Some Church pastors still tell women to “submit to their husbands”; there remains widespread community belief in the annoying wife who deserve a smack in the mouth from her long-suffering husband; we still hear the “he snapped” explanation for planned murder, even “over-killing”; drunkenness is still used as a defence/excuse for wife-bashing, but not for the crime of driving under the influence of alcohol.

² Men pretend they cannot perform domestic tasks which they consider “women’s work”. Women are expected to perform as servants at family, social and even work gatherings.

It is very difficult to recognise the pattern for what it is when:

1. you are in the midst of it
2. it is punctuated with occurrences and periods of joy and fun (he also knows how to make her very happy – he just does that less often as time progresses), and
3. as you say, individual acts may appear trivial *on their own* which also makes it very easy to label her as over-sensitive or over-reactive.

Clinical and forensic psychologist Dr Katie Seidler has treated violent offenders for over 20 years. She likens their twisting of thought to the boiling frog analogy, in which the frog boils to death without noticing the rising heat. "The moral compass skews subtly, subtly, subtly so by the time extreme acts occur, the compass is so skewed the person hasn't realised it." The effect is gradual and cumulative. The victim is like the frog which has been slowly boiled.

That coercive control is subtle, refined and elusive is what makes it so effective. To try to individually codify 'behaviours present in ordinary relationships' versus 'coercive control behaviours' will be as subjective as the judgments required when evaluating real situations. It is the pattern over time which matters. There are many examples of 'behaviour present in ordinary relationships' which is exploitative and diminishes the value of women. Some of these behaviours are even promoted as "good"³. **But good for whom?**

Following are examples of "trivial" behaviours which, with one exception, all happened to me⁴. An ongoing "compilation" of these behaviours, but punctuated (see point 2 above), slowly boils the frog.

Neglect

Neglect is sometimes cleverly disguised as *forgetting*. It results in both increased burden/workload for her and a clear sense of her non-worth. For example, habitually forgetting:

- to buy certain items that only *she* wanted
- to pick up dinner (or something else he agreed to pick)
- important events which are coming up
- the birthdays in the wider family (especially on her side)
- to pick up the children (and she receives the urgent phone calls from the school)
- anniversaries / her birthday
- her appointments for cancer treatment
- dismissing or ignoring her needs, her feelings and her opinions or preferences.

Sometimes more overt:

- failure/refusal to provide needed, promised, care when she is ill - even when her illness is life-threatening
- refusing *at the last minute* to accompany her to agreed social events because he has found something "better" to do or just *wants* to upset and humiliate her.

Uneven workload

Uneven workload is significant and common. It keeps her:

1. in servitude (which send its own message about her status in the relationship)
2. busy (with activities he wants her to occupy herself with thus preventing her from pursuing her own interests), and
3. tired (too tired even to recognise the situation and causing her to live in survival mode).

all of which support his control.

It manifests in various ways:

³ E.g. Good wives are primary carers and nurturers for everyone, self-sacrificing, the family managers, and domestic slaves through the 'traditional' unequal division of labour. Women are naturally weak (sic) need "looking after" by (even lazy abusive) men who are admired for doing very little. Good wives look good at all times (at any cost) for the pleasure of their husbands and are complimented for this rather than their abilities or attributes.

⁴ Far worse things have been done to me too but I am purposefully focused on the non-criminal aspects of domestic abuse.

- requiring her to perform the lion's share of family and domestic labour (even concurrent with her working full time in the paid workforce and even when he is fully retired)
- demanding acknowledgement, thanks and compliments for anything he does
- promising or agreeing to do things then not doing them - and if she raises this, responding angrily or accusing her of "nagging" (making it her fault)
- *pretending* to lack the knowledge and skills to perform basic domestic tasks.
- telling her she is so much better at basic domestic tasks and/or insisting that domestic and family work is women's work
- over-valuing the time and effort involved in so-called men's work (e.g. one hour of lawn-mowing versus 3 hours of shopping and 15-20 hours of cooking per week)
- cleaning the bathroom, except for *her* handbasin and the bath *she* uses.

Using other men

1. fails to support her when his friends sexually and otherwise harass her
2. pressures her to socialise with one of his mates who sexually assaulted her
3. makes her wait quietly, while he and the other the men indulge in sexist conversation
4. does nothing when one of his friends insults or abuses her and excuses that behaviour
5. in the absence of an AVO gets a male family member to assist with staging an aggressive home-invasion to "pick up things he left behind"
6. refers to a mate who is a wife-beater as just "a bit rough with THE missus"
7. refers to a mate who is a serial cheater as a "naughty boy".

Subtle silencing techniques and general intimidation/harassment

1. huffing and puffing when she expresses a view on anything
2. eye-rolling
3. storming around the house
4. standing too close or over her
5. menacing tone
6. menacing looks
7. door slamming
8. walking off in a huff
9. driving off in a cloud of dust
10. auto-disagreeing with her in banal conversation (no it is not windy; no that street is not long at all; no the rain is not heavy; no it's not hot/cold/humid)
11. tantrums
12. hovering
13. endless accusations, fault-finding and put-downs.

Withholding / Retaliating / Punishing

- an absolute inability to articulate anything positive about her abilities, skills, qualities or achievements is telling. Just ask him.
- an ever-growing list of her alleged misdemeanours and character flaws
- automatic counter accusations when she raises any concern, and "kitchen-sinking"
- going "on strike" if she isn't behaving as he wants her to

Lying, Denial, Deflection, Minimising

Offensive name-calling, swearing at her, insults

Scapegoating, blaming, reverse blaming

- I cannot remember your cancer appointments because *you* do not *properly* involve me
- I walked out and left you just before your medical appointment because you didn't hold my hand on the tram
- I did A, B, C, X, Y, Z because you do not support me
- I did A, B, C, X, Y, Z because you need to know how it feels
- If she protests about his abuse he reframes this as her being abusive
- If she shouts *back* at him he reframes this as her being abusive

Using jokes to ridicule her and women generally

Catastrophising, Suicide threats

Gaslighting

There is much already written about gaslighting and comprehensive lists of the sort of behaviours which constitute gaslighting. My current favourite is telling her repeatedly that she needs psychiatric help, which is especially malicious if coming from a mental health professional.

Subtly different versions of common tactics

1. She can “see” family members (i.e she is not totally isolated from them) but she is not allowed to talk to them without him approving or listening in.
2. He doesn't directly threaten to hit her but demands she show gratitude for not being beaten.
3. Getting his family members to also abuse her (sending offensive text messages, calling her names, putting her down, criticising her, blaming her, questioning her, etc.)

The apprehension of imminent unlawful contact (psychic assault) is easy to create – for example, threatening to hit her; slamming doors so hard that they crack; ‘accidentally’ bumping her as he walks by; reminding her in various ways that he knows where she is, what she does and where she goes; turning up at places she goes to; throwing things close to her but not quite hitting her.

Many of the above examples are sanitised by society as “boys will be boys”, or the behaviour is dismissed as harmless because it did not cause physical injury. More powerfully, through victim-blaming, society holds women responsible for the things *done to them* by another. This is psychologically crippling. It undermines self-confidence, supports other gaslighting behaviours, and deters the woman from seeking help.

Try to imagine a woman

1. *forgetting* to pick up her children from childcare
2. *forgetting* to cook dinner
3. sitting on the couch all evening, drinking, while her full-time-working husband irons, pays the bills, cooks, cleans up and does two loads of washing
4. shouting at or uttering obscenities at her husband for (insert normal behaviours)
5. demanding to be acknowledged, thanked and complimented for every little domestic chore she performs
6. huffing, puffing and eye-rolling whenever her husband expresses a view on anything
7. pretending she doesn't know *how* to hang out washing, fold clothes, make beds.

The above list of **non-criminal**, insensitive, uncaring, exploitative and hurtful behaviours is long. Is that what you mean by “behaviour present in ordinary relationships”. He would say this is normal (or her fault anyway). I disagree. Should not the “eye of the beholder (victim)” test apply? It is the effect of the behaviour that is relevant. If she complains about it she is taking a risk because he turns up the heat. She therefore tries to either keep the peace by copping and/or preventing it, or she tries to address it with him.

When she finally speaks out about it – believe her. When she finally asks for help – **deliver it immediately before it is too late**. By the time she actually asks for help, the behaviour is usually escalating and we know that when she tries to escape the escalation increases often with dire consequences.

That the ‘system’ currently ignores or mismanages such requests and awaits the occurrence of grievous, sometimes catastrophic harm, is morally indefensible.

To define this pattern of behaviour, consisting of multiple behaviours is a major challenge. To quote Jess Hill, “these men are otherwise normal, loved by family, friends and co-workers, but they can be so viciously distorted in intimate situations”. It is less a matter of definition and more a matter of setting thresholds.

3. Does existing criminal and civil law provide the police and courts with sufficient powers to address domestic violence, including non-physical and physical forms of abuse?

Whilst I applaud the current discussion about possibly criminalising coercive control, in the hands of the police, already mismanaging at best and deliberately abusing at worst, I am very concerned that this could make things worse. They do not even prosecute existing, verified crimes by men against women.

Some of the proposed lists of behaviours to include are already enshrined in the Crimes Act but are repeatedly ignored. How can that happen? Does it mean that a crime is a crime *unless* committed by a man against his current or former partner?

Coercive control legislation must not be used as a lazy alternative to the enforcement of existing laws. This could conveniently transfer existing police responsibility and embroil current criminal conduct within a new but ill-defined, highly disputed, and easily manipulated area of law.

Apprehended Violence Orders (AVOs)

The mere fact that an AVO is required at all to stop some people harassing another is telling in itself. Decent people would not go where they are unwelcome. If a victim wants help with this should we help them?

Why do applicants have to “prove” abject fear in order to *maybe* be protected (though usually not) from unwanted and menacing attention? Normal people do not harass others – but these men seem to feel so deeply entitled that her wish for no contact is irrelevant. The legal system refuses protection unless she is quivering with fear and at real risk of losing her life? Are women entitled to any quality of life? It appears that:

1. living in a state of permanent vigilance
2. living in constant apprehension of his next threat (not necessarily of violence), insult or derogatory remark
3. feeling again and again that heart-crunching pain when he does or says something horrid
4. constantly wondering if his threats (not necessarily of violence) will manifest
5. self-monitoring all the time to avoid him and/or “keep the peace”
6. feeling nervous every time you receive a text message or phone call because it might be him again continuing his persistent efforts to hurt and denigrate you

are acceptable and do not warrant the protection WE KNOW SHE CANNOT DELIVER TO HERSELF.

Why is this an acceptable life for women? Why is there such reluctance to restrict *his* freedom at the expense of *hers*? Even when an AVO is granted, serial breaches go unaddressed. Why? Why is there such reluctance to merely direct him to refrain from doing loathsome things that decent people do not do?

Police offenders

This is a special group. For example, see:

https://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2020-10-25/kate-was-charged-with-assaulting-her-police-officer-partner/12758060?nw=0&pfmredir=sm&fbclid=IwAR2AH6dSsJKK_y_K07NRHI_UpMtH9ad1X7ERaZfmLRtN1K93mkWM4sqJHjY

“For years she took his abuse without retaliation then on one occasion stood up for herself and tried to stop him from removing joint property”. The police then took action. No-one, at any point during the process, was prepared to believe her despite the fact that:

1. she had previously reported his threatening activities such as stalking, property damage, assault and intimidation
2. she had video evidence which contradicted his version of events
3. there was evidence that he and the officer in charge of the investigation had a close relationship for many years
4. the officer in charge let him gather key evidence himself and signed a document backdated several weeks,

Yet SHE WAS CONVICTED. Wow. The police failed to investigate (in some cases even record) her multiple reports of abuse but went all out to get her falsely convicted over one incident.

This is not under-resourcing. This is overt bias and dishonesty and wilful destruction of the trust and confidence between an employee and employer and between the police and the community. Such dishonesty, deliberate harm caused to a person, discrimination and refusal to follow specified work practices is gross misconduct and would result in instant dismissal in any other job. But it was only a woman.

The relevant general point is that not only do police lack objectivity, reliability and truthfulness when investigating the general public, their unethical conduct is worse when it is “their own”. Their victims are placed in additional, aggravated danger, even when the evidence is strong and clear.

The very idea of police investigating “patterns of coercive control” amongst their ranks is frightening and will never work.

4. Could the current framework be improved to better address patterns of coercive and controlling behaviour? How?

There is an existing gap in crime response which should be urgently addressed. It is almost offensive to consider introducing more legislation when legislation that is already in place is not being enforced. What will be different? This legislation will be even more complex and could provide fertile material for “annoyed, uncaring police officers” and “condescending, victim-blaming, cruel, morally bereft defence lawyers”.

Abusive men already commit crimes which are not dealt with and their repertoire can be astounding. If you believe that criminalisation is a good idea, it follows that the existing crimes codes should be enforced. Perpetration of current crimes should be prosecuted in their own right. A few examples are:

1. Threat to inflict serious injury
2. Threat to kill
3. Reckless conduct that places or may place another person in danger of death
4. Image-based abuse (in some jurisdictions)
5. Stalking
6. Use of a carriage service to menace/harass/offend
7. Use of a carriage service to threaten life
8. Use of a carriage service to threaten serious harm
9. Aggravated animal cruelty
10. Assault; aggravated assault; indecent assault and various other assault related offences including various sexual assault offences
11. Arson
12. Blackmail
13. Breaching an intervention order – there is even a separate charge for *persistent* contravention of family violence orders! Blimey
14. Causing injury intentionally; causing injury recklessly
15. False imprisonment
16. Falsification of documents
17. Fraud, forgery
18. Making false report to police
19. Weapon-related offences
20. Resisting arrest
21. Wilful damage etc.

Other criminal behaviour is specifically used by abusers to *intimidate* – e.g. subjecting her to highly dangerous driving while she weeps in terror; trying to force her into a car as his passenger when he is rolling drunk.

Stories of failure and cruelty by the “system” are not isolated. There are prolific reports of threats, assaults and court order breaches which are reported to the police but no action is taken. In addition, the reported incidence of victim-survivors being charged as offenders demonstrates:

1. bias on the part of the police, and/or
2. incompetence, and/or
3. purposeful malevolence.

This is not trivial. It is a travesty of justice. Ironically it creates deterrence for victims to report, where there is no deterrence for perpetrators to abuse. I wish to see a push for proper execution of existing laws first, lest we just add another one for the police (and the courts) to mistreat us with.

7. What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of creating an offence of coercive control?

Advantages

Early intervention before grievous or catastrophic harm is perpetrated.

Disadvantages

Already, police frequently do nothing about threats to harm. That is amazing considering that one woman is admitted to hospital for DV injuries every 3-4 hours in Australia and these are well-known, *but ignored*, precursors to femicide.

There is strong evidence that the vast majority of domestic abuse perpetrators portray themselves as the victims. Whatever the definition of coercive control, perpetrators will make exactly the same allegations. This is already one of their cc techniques.

Only skilled, investigative interviewing and examination of evidence will elicit what is actually occurring. This is not the victim's responsibility. By intent, victims are already disempowered and at risk. Most police officers do not have this skill and will not be interested in or capable of developing it.

There will be obvious signs to an alert interviewer. For example, she will say, "On xx date, I was doing the dinner dishes early the next morning as I usually did, when suddenly he flew into the kitchen, standing over me and shouting at me that I was a selfish bitch trying to disturb his sleep". She provides a very specific example. He on the other hand will say, "She is a vindictive nag who is only doing this to make me look bad", which is non-specific character assassination with no supportive evidence. A skilled and *unbiased* interviewer will identify this very significant difference.

8. How might the challenges of creating an offence of coercive control be overcome?

When an existing crime is committed, evidence of accompanying coercive control behaviours should lend considerable weight to the seriousness of the criminal offence. It should be enshrined in legislation that evidence of coercive control is highly relevant and admissible evidence. As the police evidently have difficulty caring about the seriousness of, say, a *threat* (and other already codified crimes), they need explicit and non-negotiable instructions to evaluate for, then take accompanying behaviour into consideration. If it emerges that he *also* bullies her via techniques such as

- calling her names
- shouting at her
- swearing at her
- invading her personal space
- driving her to exhaustion through over-work, etc.

then it is clear that he really does wish her ill and it would be proper and protective to charge him over the matter which *is* clearly in the criminal code. The accompanying examples of habitual bullying should be used to demonstrate and fortify the seriousness of the offence.

Any definition should include parallel abuse perpetrated by his friends and family, or their tacit support for him, which creates a network that provides no relief, encourages him to continue his abuse, and endorses the fallacy that his abuse is her fault.

The emphasis needs to be on recklessness. The element of intent will ALWAYS be denied even when it is plainly obvious to the "reasonable person". We are not dealing with reasonable persons. Often he has been informed that his behaviour is harmful (by her or via an AVO) and when it continues regardless, surely this proves intent.

15. What non-legislative activities are needed to improve the identification of and response to coercive and controlling behaviours both within the criminal justice system and more broadly?

We already know that truly effective intervention requires underlying causes to be addressed. Unquestionably a desirable and moral goal is intervention before crimes are committed.

Education Campaigns

It is important to start unequivocally promoting the unacceptability of the many, subtle abuse behaviours and entrenched patterns, and educate people to understand the many things that constitute abuse and how it develops over time. Women should also be encouraged and supported to assert their human rights and expect respect and consideration. Perhaps campaigns can include positive models of healthy and respectful engagement, including constructive disagreement.

The existing campaigns which depict extreme examples of stand-over shouting while a woman covers are ineffective and are not truly reflective of the commonest behaviours. No-one in their right mind would openly state that the depicted behaviour is acceptable. There is evidence that the abusive men are further enraged by these advertisements – thus the risk may be increased. The advertisement depicting a man leering creepily at a woman on a tram was good.

There are hundreds of examples and hundreds of opportunities to start pathologising and sanctioning subtly abusive behaviour. The spectrum is wide. There is no doubt that we must also implement urgent strategies to prevent the frequent femicides, but the abject misery and ultimate danger caused by the full spectrum also needs to be addressed.

Ideally people will start to recognise coercive control abuse earlier and get out of the relationship safely. This is currently rare. When someone does call upon the legal system to assist, it is serious. No-one in their right mind would involve police or the courts unless they had to.

If new legislation is introduced an important aspect of this too, will be the message it sends to the community that coercive controlling behaviours are not acceptable. But my question is, why are we not already sending this message?

Beware the backlash

Whatever is decided after this process, if new laws are implemented, or existing laws start to be properly enforced, there will be a backlash. My suggestion is to name this in advance. Consult now with people in the field who will already know the tactics that will emerge. Expect it and announce this. Put perpetrators and their lawyers on notice that you are alert to this and will deal with that too. When it occurs, do something.

Whilst acknowledging that female perpetrators exist, the reality is that this prospective legislation will almost entirely target men. They will fight back. The men's rights groups will have an irrational and angry response. But men throwing tantrums, however violent, cannot deter the community from dealing with the crime. Not to act makes the entire community beholden to these dangerous men.

Soapbox

I have a layperson's understanding and acceptance of precedent law, burden of proof, entitlement to a defence, rules of evidence and legal processes – however:

- improper questioning of victims and witnesses is common
- gratuitous character assassination of, and exposure of irrelevant personal information about victims and witnesses are common
- distortion, irrelevant attacks and bald-faced dishonesty occur frequently.

Worshipped legal doctrines assert that they provide an infallible and constant set of rules established by a higher power - as if these rules were not written and passed down over the centuries by a group consisting almost entirely of privileged white men for whom violence against women is merely an unfortunate predicament. This set of rules has utterly and consistently failed to protect millions of women subjected to extreme violence, and also turns a blind eye to lesser violence via threats, intimidation, assault, dehumanisation, subjugation, marginalisation, disadvantage, degradation, humiliation, victim-blaming etc. There is practically no general or specific deterrence achieved in the domestic abuse arena via the application of this "infallible and constant" set of rules yet the legal profession protects it with a level of hyper-defensiveness and has the gall to lecture the community about intruding on human rights.

Conclusion

No woman wants to admit to being abused – often not even to herself for a long time. It is soul-destroying, deeply painful and humiliating. The abuse feels like deep and agonising betrayal.

Admitting it is a giant step closer to the end of the relationship with a man she “loves”. When a man she has loved deeply chooses to lose her rather than address his own behaviour, she goes through heart-wrenching pain and a traumatic grief process.

When she finally does admit it – believe her. What she wants is for it to stop. If escape is the *only* way, so be it. It often is.

Currently when she tries to get protection, what often happens next is a detailed forensic examination of HER – not him. This is followed by supplementary or [double abuse](#) at the hands of the police, his family, the courts and legal system, counsellors and sometimes even her own family... the very people who she should be able to rely on for help. This imposes a double betrayal and further demoralisation. In a moral society this cannot continue.

The elusiveness of cc behaviours makes them especially insidious and difficult to pin down objectively. I fear deeply therefore, that if legislation proceeds ineffectively, male rage will increase and women will be even worse off.

A woman who decides to call upon the legal system has been pushed to the brink. She is in a situation which is so bad she has decided that the alarming risks associated with the current, largely ineffective system are her final hope in an attempt to seek safety.

Whilst some individual cc behaviours might lend themselves to “criminalisation” most do not. Trying to codify individual behaviours as “cc or non-cc” is impractical. It is particularly difficult to spot an abusive relationship when the abuse is emotional, especially in its covert form. What we need to do is recognise the many ingredients of this pattern of abuse and help her to safety – in some cases keep her and her children alive.

It is well known that the most dangerous time for a woman in a domestic abuse situation is when she leaves or is trying to leave. When a woman calls upon the police or legal system to help her with escaping or getting the abuse to stop, she is in trouble. For the system to fail her at this point in time is indefensible – this specific failure can place her in imminent danger.

Women (and some men) are finally speaking up against abusers and the “system” has a moral responsibility to listen to and learn from survivors. There is also a large group of women still stuck in these situations, not yet escaped, but trying. Sadly too, there are lessons from the 52 women who are killed each year in this country. . There are far too many stories of women having called for help from the police and the legal system being either ignored or denied the support they seek, who have later been maimed and/or killed. The people who could have helped but did not, often due to sexist bias and callous insensitivity should hang their heads in shame.

Yours faithfully,

Debra Gillick

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