

**Submission
No 38**

COERCIVE CONTROL IN DOMESTIC RELATIONSHIPS

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I welcome the opportunity to provide comments on the NSW Government's Discussion Paper on Coercive Control and to take part in the broader debate on law reform to better protect victims of family and domestic violence.

I support criminalisation of coercive control. I note that there are many organisations calling for criminalisation.

In considering any legislation for NSW there are many examples that can be considered including England, Scotland, and Wales.

In supporting law reform I note that the victims of family and domestic violence are primarily women and children.

Current practices to protect victims often fall short and need to be improved. The NSW Women's Legal Service noted that it worked daily with women and children who did not receive adequate responses from Police.

Apart from any new law there is also a need to monitor how existing laws and practices are applied. Regular audits of policing of sexual, domestic and family violence would be one measure that could be adopted. The NSW Ombudsman recommended such audits in 2011. However the recommendation was not implemented.

In conjunction with any proposal to criminalise coercive control there should be resources made available for public education, as well as specialist training for Police, and community workers on how to recognise the early signs and patterns of control that may lead to further violence.

I would hope that criminalisation would lead to greater community understanding of the patterns of violence which in turn could improve the circumstances of victims of family and domestic violence.