

**Submission
No 63**

COERCIVE CONTROL IN DOMESTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

SUMMARY

My mother was a victim of coercive control for 18 years.

She was groomed by her clinical psychologist and coerced to leave her husband and enter into a relationship.

She was coerced into this relationship based upon a deception.

Her clinical psychologist fabricated being married and having two children and then that her “family” was killed in a car accident.

Her clinical psychologist feigned being suicidal due to this “traumatic grief” and used the threat of “suicide” to create a sufficient psychological lever to get my mother to divorce her husband and start an intimate relationship with her.

This perfect lie and fabricated backstory was then used as the underlying instrument of coercive control for the next 18 years to psychologically manipulate, control and ultimately destroy my mother’s state of mind.

The eventual discovery of this deception in the last days of my mother’s life and the ultimate betrayal it represented, led to my mother’s suicide on [REDACTED]

RESPONSE TO QUESTIONS IN THE DISCUSSION PAPER

In reference to question no.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?”

There is no current law under the NSW Act, that prohibits anybody from lying about their past in a significant way for personal gain, even when it results in psychological demise, leading to bankruptcy, social isolation and in my mother’s case, suicide.

The perpetrator of coercive control was her marriage partner. She is also a practicing clinical psychologist and has been for 25 years. She knows there is no law to stop her doing this and she used her professional position to groom my mother and in doing so, perpetrated a gross boundary violation.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

If there is no law and she is not held accountable for anything, then she will go back to practicing clinical psychology. Emboldened. Knowing that she is beyond the law and fully capable of continuing to inflict coercive control on the vulnerable members of society who come to her in trust, looking for moral and psychological guidance.

[REDACTED]

In reference to question no.5:

“Does the law currently provide adequate ways for courts to receive evidence of coercive and controlling behaviour in civil and criminal proceedings?”

As there is no current law, neither the police nor the coroner took into account our version of the events leading to my mother’s death. They only took into account the statement given to them by her marriage partner who was in fact, the perpetrator of the coercive controlling behaviours, which we reported.

The ‘police brief of evidence’ that was put forward to the coroner contained incorrect information provided by police and not once (despite a large amount of evidence provided) did the police acknowledge that my mother was a ‘victim of domestic violence’.

The coroner’s ‘reason for dispensing an inquest’ contained information that did not reflect what actually happened to my mother, and there was absolutely no acknowledgement of the two-decade long deception that my mother’s partner created to control her, or the potential impacts that it would have had on her psychological wellbeing. Instead, the coroner concluded that my mother had a history of “previous mental health issues”. This false information came from her partner; the clinical psychologist; the perpetrator of coercive control.

Our family was denied a coronial inquest into my mother’s death. There needs to be a framework in place, so that when families come forward with evidence indicating coercive control was a huge contributing factor into someone’s death by unnatural causes, it is acknowledged by police and by the coroner.

In reference to question no.7:

“What are the advantages and/or disadvantages of creating an offence of coercive control?”

The advantage of creating an offence of coercive control will be that the police will have a legal framework within which to recognise coercive controlling behaviour before it leads to tragedy.

Current victims of coercive control and victim-survivors will have a legal framework within which to present evidence that could lead to legal redress.

It will not only help to de-stigmatise DFV, so that people who are in crisis won't feel so ashamed to ask for help, but it will also bring coercive control to the attention of the general public that it is real; it exists and often has catastrophic repercussions on victims, their families and the wider community.

That the perpetrators of coercive control are not only stereotypically male, heterosexual, working class and poorly educated. As in this case, they can be in same-sex relationships; they can be highly educated; they can be in positions of power and status within the community. Perpetrators of coercive control can be any gender; any sexuality; any demographic; any level of society and in any position of society, high or low. They can be anyone.

In reference to question no.9:

"If an offence of coercive control were introduced in NSW, how should the scope of the offence be defined, what behaviours should it include and what other factors should be taken into account?"

In our dealing with the police since my mother's suicide, they have told us many times that it is not against the law to lie in a relationship. For example, statistically how many married people in Australia are having an affair? We are not suggesting that infidelity could or should be against the law.

However, there is an enormous difference between marital infidelity and creating a completely bogus persona and past history and then using that persona to manipulate and deceive your partner over nearly two decades for personal gain. This is clearly a gross misrepresentation and we are calling for a law that would prosecute it.

In reference to question no.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?"

If coercive control was recognised under the law, then victims, survivors, police, the media, NGOs, and any other relevant stakeholder would have a reference point within which to be proactive in identifying and stopping/convicting perpetrators.

In addition, it would generate significant discussion within the wider community via the media and help the untrained general public recognise and identify the 'red flags' of coercive control, before it's too late.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- 1. [REDACTED]
- 2. [REDACTED]
- 3. [REDACTED]
- 4. [REDACTED]
- 5. [REDACTED]
- 6. [REDACTED]
- 7. [REDACTED]
- 8. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Although coercive control seems like a complex issue, it is also very black and white. The stories are all similar, the tactics the perpetrators use are often the same, and there is quite an obvious link with perpetrators of coercive control and Narcissistic Personality Disorder.

The clear cut dangers of emotional and psychological abuse compared to physical violence are that when you remove the victim from a physically abusive situation, they are safe, but when you remove a victim from a controlling/brainwashing environment, the legacy of the process runs so deep through the victim's mind, they will likely seek to return to the abuser. It is a form of Stockholm Syndrome.

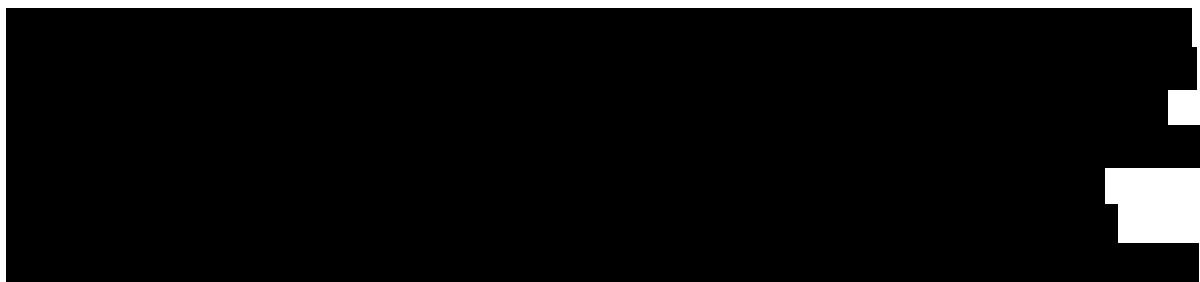
Coercive control slowly chips away at your independence, your self-worth and sense of autonomy, leaving victims feeling worthless, confused and often ashamed. It is extremely important to criminalise this form of abuse and recognise it as its own entity. I am sure there are many cases, like ours, where the perpetrator was never physically violent, yet the long-term impact of psychological abuse, has been far more damaging.

By criminalising coercive control, it will validate the experiences of countless survivors dealing with severe Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which is a hallmark of those who managed to escape or were rescued from these abusive situations. It will send a clear message to victims who are currently in these situations, that should they find the strength to come forward and ask for help from law enforcement, that they will be heard.

The urgency of criminalising coercive control and recognising it as its own form of domestic violence is that these behaviours exist across the entire community and it is not just the behaviour of 'recognised criminals'. In our case, severe coercive control was inflicted upon my mother, not by a stereotypical "wife basher", but by a clinical psychologist. A person in a position of utmost trust and power, and had we been aware of coercive control sooner, we may have been able to recognise the obvious 'red flags', before it was too late.

I hope that by submitting our story that it brings attention to the fact that the perpetrators are not just men, and coercive control doesn't only take place in heterosexual relationships. The issue needs to be examined from a much broader perspective.

We hear about cases in the media about domestic family violence being linked with homicide, but the link between DFV and suicide, also needs to be taken into serious consideration. The most dangerous time for a victim is when the perpetrator feels like they have lost control of the victim. This is usually when the victim is trying to end the relationship, or shortly after they've escaped.



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I want to leave you with the excerpt I came across from a forum of victim-survivors of narcissistic abuse:

“The goal of this covert game of love, is to drive a person crazy, and with all of their gaslighting, lying, cheating, manipulation and mind games, that are so insidious and painful coming from a person that once was idealised and put you on a pedestal, will literally be driven to the edge of insanity.

The victim will become so confused by all of the mixed messages, over and over, between the idealisation of love-bombing phase, to the degradation and abusive belittling devaluation phase and the narcissist will repeat these two steps back and forth until the victim starts to doubt their own reality. The significant other will become so depressed and discombobulated in a desperate state of confusion that the person will become so desperate for any respite or escape, that they may contemplate suicide or even actually end their lives by suicide. It’s literally murdering a person for “caring too much” for an individual that is completely void of any empathy and incapable of loving anyone beyond themselves.”

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Until coercive control is criminalised in NSW, more innocent lives will be lost, and more families will be left having to deal with the repercussion of losing their loved ones as a result. Something needs to be done.

[REDACTED]

Thank you,

[REDACTED]