

**Submission
No 80**

COERCIVE CONTROL IN DOMESTIC RELATIONSHIPS

Organisation: Lisa Harnum Foundation

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The Lisa Harnum Foundation (LHF) is an established service offering specialised assistance in supporting women and children who are experiencing some form of domestic abuse. LHF operates in the Hills & Ryde LGA's. There is a significant number of our clients experiencing the 'silent abuse' - i.e. emotional, psychological, financial, stalking, harassment and spiritual abuse all of which is hard to prove. How often have women taken up the courage to visit a local police station, to make a complaint about their partner abusing them in withholding money and putting them down in name calling and belittling, only to be told by the police officer that there is nothing they (police) can do about it!!! The woman walks away feeling despondent and depressed. Who will ever believe her? Who will ever help her? This is a story that LHF can recount a thousand times over. It is frustrating for the client as well as the caseworker. Police officers need more training in dealing with women who are brave enough to come forward. Empathy and understanding by the police is, in LHF's experience, negligible. Introducing a coercive control law that covers the 'silent abuse' will assist more women to be able to make a valid complaint, be heard, and understood and more importantly will be able to apply for an AVO in most circumstances. LHF strongly supports the introduction of a Coercive Control Law to be introduced in to NSW.