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Violence

MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW PASSES LANDMARK COERCIVE CONTROL REFORM

NSW will become the first Australian state or territory to create a stand-alone offence for coercive control, with historic and life-saving law reforms passing Parliament today.

Coercive control is a form of domestic abuse that involves patterns of behaviour that have the cumulative effect of denying victim-survivors their autonomy and independence.

The new law will make it an offence to carry out repeated abusive behaviours to a current or former intimate partner with the intent to coerce or control, and will carry a sentence of up to seven years in jail.

Premier Dominic Perrottet said NSW continued to lead the nation in addressing women's safety and domestic and family violence issues.

"We made a commitment to deliver these landmark reforms to protect our people from this insidious form of domestic violence, and today we have delivered on that commitment by criminalising coercive control in intimate partner relationships," Mr Perrottet said.

"There is no doubt that these reforms, which are the first of their kind in this country, will help save lives and deter an abusive and controlling pattern of behaviour that is unacceptable."

Minister for Women Bronnie Taylor said today the NSW Government stands shoulder to shoulder with victim-survivors and their families, and the families of those whose lives have been tragically taken, in condemning this insidious abuse.

"The NSW Government has acted to ensure the lives of women, children and all members of our community will be made safer," Mrs Taylor said.

Attorney General Mark Speakman said these landmark reforms are the product of unprecedented consultation, including at least eight rounds of consultation over two and a half years.

“Our extensive consultation has included a public discussion paper in 2020; an extensive parliamentary inquiry by the Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control; a public exposure draft that received almost 200 written submissions; targeted consultations on cabinet in confidence exposure drafts; and almost 30 stakeholder roundtables,” Mr Speakman said.

“This unprecedented engagement has allowed us to make careful adjustments to ensure we have the best possible laws to tackle this form of domestic terrorism.

“Domestic abuse isn’t just about physical violence. Perpetrators of domestic abuse also use physical, sexual, psychological and financial abuse to hurt and control their ‘loved one’. Sadly, this behaviour is a known precursor to domestic violence deaths.”

Minister for Women’s Safety and the Prevention of Domestic Violence Natalie Ward, who chaired the Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control, said the laws achieve radical reform in a carefully calibrated way.

“We are immensely grateful to the many witnesses who courageously provided evidence to the Joint Select Committee on Coercive Control and helped shape these landmark reforms,” Mrs Ward said.

“Our community has grieved with the families of too many domestic violence murder victims where the precursor was abusive behaviour that stripped away autonomy and human dignity.

“These reforms will drive societal change to make sure we protect our most vulnerable and provide an avenue to justice for those who need it most.”

“There will be an extensive implementation period of at least 14 months and up to 19 months before the laws commence, to allow plenty of time for training, resourcing, education and raising community awareness.”

The NSW Government has committed an additional \$69.6 million in this year’s Budget for services that support victim-survivors of domestic and family violence, and minimise the trauma experienced during legal proceedings.

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