



Mark Speakman
Attorney General
Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence

MEDIA RELEASE

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COERCIVE CONTROL REFORM

Domestic violence victim-survivors, frontline services, legal experts, law enforcement, academics and the community will soon have the opportunity to share their views on whether to criminalise coercive control in NSW.

Attorney General and Minister for the Prevention of Domestic Violence Mark Speakman said the NSW Government would move this week to establish a Parliamentary Joint Select Committee that will hold a public inquiry to examine coercive control in detail.

The NSW Government is also issuing a comprehensive Discussion Paper today detailing key issues. The Inquiry can also use this as a guide to help inform consideration of this complex topic.

Mr Speakman encouraged all interested parties to review the Discussion Paper, should they wish to contribute to the Inquiry in the near future.

“The horrific rate of domestic violence murders in Australia remains stubbornly consistent and coercive and controlling behaviour is a common precursor to intimate partner homicide,” Mr Speakman said.

“Creating a coercive control offence would be a complex though potentially very worthwhile reform that could help prevent these homicides.

“Thorough research, consultation and careful consideration is crucial to avoid risks such as misidentifying victims as offenders or capturing behaviour that ought not to be criminalised.”

Coercive control is a form of domestic abuse involving repeated patterns of abusive behaviour – which can include physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or financial abuse – the cumulative effect of which is to rob victim-survivors of their autonomy and independence.

“The impact of this abuse is abhorrent, but the appropriate response to this behaviour remains an ongoing challenge for law enforcement and legal minds alike,” Mr Speakman said.

“Adapting from an incident-based model of investigation and prosecution to that of a course of conduct would be a significant change to the way our justice system broadly operates.

“A new offence may not be the best, or only, way to improve our response to non-physical forms of domestic abuse.”

The Government's Discussion Paper highlights numerous key issues, including:

- what coercive control is and how it should be defined;
- how coercive and controlling behaviours are currently addressed in NSW;
- experiences of other jurisdictions in responding to coercive control;
- how evidence of coercive control is currently considered in NSW legal proceedings;
- potential benefits and practical challenges associated with criminalising coercive control;
- possible elements of an offence of coercive control;
- other avenues for legislative reform; and
- non-legislative issues like education and community awareness.

To read the full Discussion Paper, visit: <http://www.crimeprevention.nsw.gov.au/domesticviolence/Pages/coercive-control-discussion-paper.aspx>

Further updates on the Parliamentary Inquiry will be available in the coming weeks, including details on how to make a submission.

For confidential advice, support and referrals related to domestic and family violence, contact **1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732)**, the **NSW Domestic Violence Line (1800 65 64 63)** or the **Men's Referral Service (1300 766 491)**.