

National Principles to Address Coercive Control

– yourtown's advocacy submission



What is it about?

On 12 August 2022, the Meeting of Attorneys-General agreed to release a Consultation Draft of the National Principles. Coercive control is a pressing issue that requires a coordinated, national approach. The Australian Government and state and territory governments are working together to develop National Principles to Address Coercive Control.

Why is it important?

The National Principles will help create a shared national understanding of coercive control, which is important for improving the safety of Australians, particularly women and children.

Some of yourtown's key messages:

1. Risk of impacting those experiencing coercive control in all contexts

The development of the National Principles provides an opportune moment to inform the national dialogue and the broader community about the various forms of dominating behaviours that coercive control can take from an Australian lens.

However, limiting the scope of the National Principles to the context of family and domestic violence risks skewing understandings of what coercive control is or can be. The Consultation Draft fails to appropriately consider coercive control in other contexts including in situations of elder abuse, financial abuse, mental health involuntary treatment and/or forced treatment, and controlling behaviours perpetrated against migrant working communities.

It is also recommended that gender neutral language is used throughout the National Principles.

2. Impact on children and young people

National Principle 2 should be revised to better represent the impact on children and young people, including the risk of repeating behaviours modelled in familial settings. Children and young people should be treated as experiencing violence and coercive control in their own right, not simply as dependents of a parent experiencing violence and coercive control. This requires an approach that upholds the safety of children and young people, protects their human rights, and incorporates their voices in decisions that affect them.

3. Strengthen system integration and remove red tape

Coordinated approaches under National Principle 6 should include strengthening integration of local, area and state-wide services across mental health, health, child protection, education, employment, and other social systems to recognise and respond to coercive control.

4. Criminalisation

Significant caution should be exercised by State and Territory Governments in developing and implementing a specific coercive control offence.



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