



# Submission cover sheet

## **Inquiry into the Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2026**

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Submitter: Victims of Crime Assistance League

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Victims of Crime Assistance League (VOCAL) ACT Inc.

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We welcome the invitation to make a submission to the inquiry. We submit on behalf of victims of crime in the ACT.

We welcome the introduction of coercive control as a separate and independent offence. We believe that amending the Bill to include this specific form of abuse will benefit victims by recognising different patterns of abusive behaviour, and that abuse can occur without physical or mental harm. However; abuse often occurs through economic and emotional control. These actions do continue to cause harm to victims, and we invite an amendment to the bill that protects individuals from this form of abuse and harm. It has been VOCAL's experience that a victim can be made to engage into undesirable sexual behaviours which lead to suicide. Other victims have been coerced to the point of a loss of their family home and cases of financial extortion through carers or close family members of the victim.

We believe this change will benefit and empower victims, by recognising concealed behaviours and the long-lasting negative impacts of coercive control on an individual's life. We believe that these changes will encourage victims to speak up, seek support, and report abuse, as their experiences will be explicitly addressed.

We would like the committee to introduce further measures to empower victims, so they can understand the nature of coercive control and domestic and family violence. Victims should receive education and information about coercive behaviours in domestic settings. We also encourage the committee to introduce a consistent, comprehensive definition for coercion or coercive control so the amendments can be accurately applied and used. A definition would assist victims in understanding and recognising coercive behaviour.

We are concerned with the absence of a clear definition of coercive control, as this may enable people to use the Amended 2026 Bill to bring wrongful accusations or be used as a means of manipulation and harm. The definition should include explanations of control by financial, emotional, and sexual manipulation and physical threatening behaviours and language. The definition of coercive control should be designed to recognise enduring, complex patterns of behaviour and the impact that it can have on victims. Without a clear definition of coercive control, we fear the laws may be used to harm others by making unsupported accusations, which can negatively impact victims' lives through legal and financial consequences; especially regarding the career or employment prospects of the accused.

Kind regards,

Victims of Crime Assistance League ACT Inc.