



Submission cover sheet

Inquiry into the Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2026

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Overview of Submission

The Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN) strongly supports the intent and direction of the Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2026.

This Bill represents a significant and progressive reform that acknowledges a reality long experienced by victim-survivors: family violence is not always physical. It often manifests as a sustained pattern of domination, intimidation, isolation, surveillance, financial control, cultural abuse, emotional manipulation, and threats that gradually erode a person's autonomy and wellbeing.

The proposed offence of coercive control recognises that family violence is often cumulative rather than incident-based and seeks to address harms that have historically fallen outside traditional criminal justice responses. AMAN commends the ACT Government for demonstrating leadership in introducing this legislation and for establishing an Advisory Committee to guide implementation.

However, legislation alone will not achieve the desired outcomes. Success will depend on culturally responsive implementation, community education, workforce capability, data collection, victim support systems, and continuous evaluation.

As an organisation representing multicultural, migrant, refugee, disability and culturally diverse communities across the ACT, AMAN believes the ACT has a unique opportunity to become a national leader in implementing coercive control reforms that are both effective and inclusive.

About AMAN

The Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN) is a community-led organisation that advocates for multicultural communities, seniors, people with disability, newly arrived migrants, refugees, and other vulnerable groups.

AMAN regularly contributes to:

- ACT Government consultations
- Federal Government inquiries
- Open Government initiatives
- Community engagement and co-design processes
- CALD community capacity building
- Social inclusion and equity programs

Through our direct engagement with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities, we frequently hear experiences that align with coercive control behaviours but are often not recognised as family violence by victims, service providers, or communities.

AMAN's Position

AMAN fully supports:

1. Recognition of Coercive Control as a Serious Criminal Offence

The proposed offence appropriately recognises that family violence is often a pattern of behaviour rather than isolated incidents. The inclusion of a "course of conduct" approach reflects contemporary evidence and lived experience.

2. Recognition of Psychological Harm

Many victim-survivors experience profound psychological harm without visible injuries.

The Bill appropriately acknowledges:

- Fear
- Intimidation
- Emotional abuse
- Isolation
- Ongoing control

as serious forms of harm deserving criminal recognition.

3. Advisory Committee Establishment

AMAN strongly welcomes the creation of the Coercive Control Advisory Committee.

This Committee provides a critical opportunity to ensure implementation remains evidence-based, community-informed, and responsive to emerging challenges.

Key Opportunities for Strengthening Implementation

1. Cultural Abuse Should Receive Explicit Recognition

Many multicultural communities experience forms of coercive control that are culturally specific.

Examples include:

- Threats of deportation
- Withholding migration sponsorship support
- Restricting English language learning
- Preventing participation in cultural activities
- Controlling access to religious practices
- Manipulating family members overseas
- Threatening forced marriage
- Threatening family reputation within cultural communities

While these behaviours may already fall within broader family violence definitions, explicit implementation guidance would assist police, courts, service providers and communities to recognise them.

Recommendation

Develop ACT-specific guidance material identifying cultural abuse as a recognised form of coercive control.

2. Improve Awareness Within CALD Communities

One of the greatest risks is that victim-survivors may not recognise coercive control as unlawful.

Many community members:

- Normalise controlling behaviours
- Fear bringing shame to families
- Distrust government systems
- Face language barriers
- Fear visa consequences

Without targeted education, the legislation may disproportionately benefit people already connected to services.

Recommendation

Fund a multilingual community awareness campaign using:

- Ethnic media
- Community leaders
- Faith organisations
- Multicultural associations
- Social media
- Community champions

Information should be available in plain English and major community languages.

3. Build Specialist Capability Across Frontline Services

The effectiveness of this legislation will depend heavily on those responsible for identifying and responding to coercive control.

This includes:

- ACT Policing
- Child protection services
- Health professionals
- Family violence services
- Community organisations
- Legal practitioners
- Judicial officers

Recommendation

Develop mandatory coercive control training with dedicated modules covering:

- CALD communities
 - Disability inclusion
 - Elder abuse
 - LGBTQIA+ experiences
 - Technology-facilitated abuse
 - Financial abuse
 - Trauma-informed responses
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4. Address Technology-Facilitated Coercive Control

Technology is increasingly being used to monitor, intimidate and control victims.

Examples include:

- Location tracking
- Monitoring communications
- Smart home surveillance
- Social media monitoring

- Digital financial control
- AI-enabled impersonation
- Deepfake threats

The rapid growth of artificial intelligence will create new forms of coercive control that traditional frameworks may not adequately address.

Recommendation

The Advisory Committee should establish a dedicated Technology and Emerging Risks Working Group to monitor evolving patterns and recommend future legislative updates.

5. Strengthen Data Collection and Public Reporting

Australia currently lacks comprehensive data regarding coercive control prevalence and outcomes.

Robust data will be essential for assessing whether the legislation is achieving its objectives.

Recommendation

Annual public reporting should include:

- Number of investigations
- Charges laid
- Convictions
- Demographic data
- Cultural background indicators
- Victim-survivor experiences
- Service utilisation data

This information should be de-identified and publicly available.

Innovative Future-Focused Recommendations

Establish an ACT Coercive Control Prevention Strategy

Rather than focusing solely on criminal justice responses, the ACT should develop a whole-of-government prevention framework.

This strategy could integrate:

- Education
- Housing
- Health
- Justice

- Community services
- Schools
- Workplaces

The ACT could become Australia's first jurisdiction with a dedicated prevention strategy focused specifically on coercive control.

Create a Community Ambassador Program

Train respected community leaders to act as:

- Awareness champions
- Referral pathways
- Trusted information sources

This model has proven successful in multicultural health and domestic violence prevention programs internationally.

Develop an Early Intervention Risk Assessment Model

Using evidence-based indicators, ACT agencies could identify emerging coercive control behaviours before escalation to serious violence.

The goal should be prevention rather than merely prosecution.

Create a Lived Experience Reference Panel

Victim-survivors should be permanently involved in shaping implementation.

No policy framework can be fully effective without the voices of those directly affected.

The Advisory Committee should establish a standing lived-experience panel that reflects:

- CALD communities
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
 - Disability communities
 - LGBTQIA+ communities
 - Older persons
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Position the ACT as a National Leader

The ACT has a unique opportunity to develop a best-practice model that could influence reforms nationally.

Success should not be measured only by prosecutions.

Success should also be measured by:

- Increased community awareness
- Earlier help-seeking
- Reduced victim isolation
- Increased trust in services
- Improved safety outcomes
- Reduced intergenerational trauma

Advisory Committee Membership

Given the critical implementation role of the proposed Advisory Committee, AMAN recommends representation from:

- Family violence specialists
- Victim-survivors
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives
- Multicultural organisations
- Disability advocates
- Legal experts
- Mental health professionals
- Technology and cyber safety experts
- Community sector leaders

This diversity will strengthen implementation and community confidence.

Conclusion

AMAN strongly supports the Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2026 and congratulates the ACT Government for pursuing this important reform.

The Bill recognises a fundamental truth: family violence is often characterised by patterns of control rather than isolated incidents. By criminalising coercive control, the ACT is taking an important step towards protecting victim-survivors and addressing forms of abuse that have too often remained hidden.

However, legislation is only the beginning. Effective implementation will require cultural competence, community engagement, technological foresight, workforce capability, lived-experience leadership, and ongoing evaluation.

AMAN stands ready to support the ACT Government, the Advisory Committee, and community stakeholders in ensuring that this reform delivers meaningful, equitable and lasting outcomes for all Canberrans.

Submitted respectfully on behalf of the Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN).

Ravi Krishnamurthy

President

Australian Multicultural Action Network (AMAN)