



Submission cover sheet

Inquiry into the Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2026

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Ms Chiaka Barry MLA

Chair, Standing Committee on Legal Affairs

ACT Legislative Assembly

By email: LACommitteeLegal@parliament.act.gov.au

Dear Chair

Inquiry into Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2026

I welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the Standing Committee on Legal Affairs' Inquiry into the Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2026 (the Bill).

The purpose of the ACT Ombudsman is to influence systemic improvements in public administration in the Australian Capital Territory and provide assurance that ACT government agencies within our jurisdiction act with fairness and integrity. One of the ways my Office achieves its purpose is through our oversight of the Reportable Conduct Scheme.

ACT Reportable Conduct Scheme

The Reportable Conduct Scheme (the Scheme) is set out in Division 2.2A of the *Ombudsman Act 1989*, with section 17E(1) defining reportable conduct.

Under the Scheme, designated entities¹ must report any allegations or convictions of child-related misconduct by their employees to the ACT Ombudsman. These include allegations made in the context of both an employee's professional and private life. Designated entities are also required to have practices and procedures to prevent and respond to reportable conduct, and to handle and share information in accordance with provisions in the *Children and Young People Act 2008*.

¹ 'Designated entities' covered by the Scheme include ACT Government directorates, health services, kinship and foster care organisations, residential care organisations, government and non-government schools, childcare services, education and care services (including after school care), and religious organisations.

The ACT Ombudsman's role is to:

- receive and assess designated entities' responses to reportable conduct allegations or convictions, including whether there was appropriate action by the designated entity in its response and the adequacy of any investigation carried out by the designated entity
- monitor the above practices and procedures a designated entity has in place to meet its obligations under the Scheme.

Coercive control within the Scheme

Elements of the behaviour that would amount to coercive control under the proposed new criminal offence would likely already be captured within the reportable conduct definition (through s 17E(b)(i) ill treatment of a child, or s 17E(b)(ii)(A) exposing or subjecting the child to behaviour, or a circumstance, that psychologically harms the child).

However, expressly including coercive control within the definition of reportable conduct would provide formal recognition of the serious and cumulative harm caused by this behaviour and reinforce the importance of protecting children and young people from exposure to domestic and family violence.

Additionally, recognising coercive control within the Scheme acknowledges that this form of abuse is often characterised by a course of conduct that is most appropriately understood when considered as a whole, rather than as a series of individual incidents. It would also mirror the approach of s 17E(1)(b)(iii), which includes in the definition, conduct that results in an offence against Parts 2 (Offences against the person), 3 (Sexual offences), 4 (Female genital mutilation) and 5 (Sexual servitude) of the *Crimes Act 1900*, for which a child is either present or a victim at the time.

For these reasons, I welcome the amendment as a strong signal reinforcing the unacceptability of coercive control.

ACT Ombudsman