

National Principles on coercive control in family and domestic violence

An Easy Read guide



How to use this guide



The Australian Government Attorney-General's Department (AGD) wrote this guide.

When you see the word 'we', it means AGD.



We wrote this guide in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

Bold

We wrote some important words in **bold**.

Not bold

This means the letters are thicker and darker.



We explain what these bold words mean.

There is a list of these words on page 32.



This is an Easy Read summary of another document.

This means it only includes the most important ideas.



You can find the other document on our website.

www.ag.gov.au/coercivecontrol



You can ask for help to read this guide.

A friend, family member or support person may be able to help you.



In this guide we talk about some things that might:

- upset you
- make you feel worried.



You can talk to someone about how you feel.

You can also get support if you experience coercive control.



We explain who you can talk to on page 27.

What's in this guide?

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What is this guide about?



This guide is to help you understand what **coercive control** is.



Coercive control is when someone treats another person badly over time.

They do this to:

- give themselves power
- control the other person.



Coercive control takes away a person's freedom.

And it makes them feel scared.



Coercive control is almost always part of **family and domestic violence**.



Family and domestic violence is when someone close to you hurts you, such as:

- your partner
- a member of your family
- someone who takes care of you
- someone you live with.



This guide focuses on coercive control from a partner or family member.



Not everyone understands what coercive control is.

That's why we need **principles**.



Principles are important ideas that tell us how to make things better.

What are the National Principles?

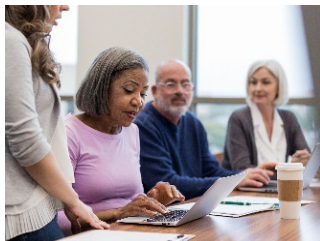


The Australian Government and the state and territory governments wrote the National Principles.

In this guide we just call them principles.



The principles are about making sure everyone understands coercive control and how it affects people.



And they will help us know what everyone must do to respond to coercive control.

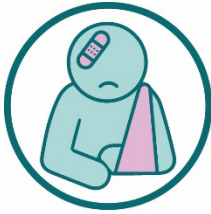


There are 7 principles.

We explain them on the following pages.

Principle 1. Recognising coercive control

Coercive control can happen when someone:



- hurts your body



- makes you feel bad about yourself



- makes you do sexual things you don't want to.

It can include when someone controls:



- who you talk to



- where you go



- your money.



Every person's experience of coercive control can be different.

Some people may not even realise that a person is using coercive control.



Coercive control might build up or get worse over time.

Or it might change as things in a person's life changes, like having a baby.



People who use coercive control might also trick services into thinking nothing is wrong.



And they might use technology to help them use coercive control.

For example, using your phone to know where you are.



Most coercive control is planned.

But even when it's not, it's still coercive control.



Coercive control often happens when one person has more power in a relationship.



Most of the time coercive control happens when a man controls a woman.



But it can happen to anyone.

Principle 2.

How coercive control affects people



Coercive control affects people when it's happening to them.

But it can also affect them for a long time afterwards.



Coercive control can affect every part of a person's life, including:

- their physical health and mental health
- how safe they feel
- their wellbeing.



The community often doesn't understand that non-physical **abuse** can be coercive control.

And non-physical abuse can seriously affect people's lives.

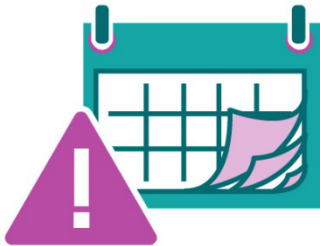


Abuse is when someone treats you badly.



People who use coercive control can make other people feel scared to:

- get support and use services
- leave the relationship.

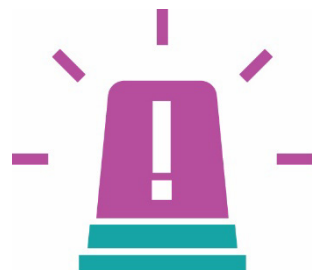


Coercive control can get worse over time.



It can also get worse:

- while someone is leaving their partner
- after they leave the relationship.



It can even lead to someone being killed.



Coercive control can keep going after a relationship ends.



It doesn't always stop when the relationship does.



We need to recognise how strong people are when they experience coercive control.

This includes how hard they work to protect themselves and their children.

Principle 3.

Thinking about intersectionality



It's important to understand how the different experiences of people:

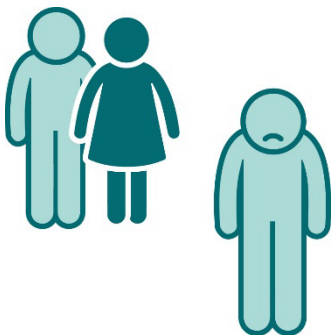
- overlap
- affect each other.

We call this **intersectionality**.



Every person who experiences coercive control is different.

So we can't expect them to have the same experiences.



Discrimination can also affect how a person experiences coercive control.

Discrimination is when people treat you unfairly because of a part of who you are.

This includes how services treat you.

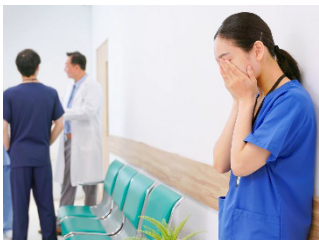
People might experience discrimination for different parts of who they are, like:



- the way they look
- who they love
- where they come from.



For example, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples can experience a lot of discrimination.



This can happen in:

- the community
- an organisation or service.



Discrimination can make coercive control worse.

And it can affect the support people can get.



Discrimination can lead to services ignoring a person's experiences of coercive control.

Or they might not believe it's happening.



Discrimination can also lead to people thinking that a person experiencing coercive control is actually the person using it.

And this can put them at risk of more harm.



People who use coercive control can use this to hurt people more.



Governments must think about these things when they make any plans to address coercive control.

Principle 4.

Why the community should know about coercive control



As a community, we haven't always understood coercive control.



Often the community and services focus on:

- physical violence
- one act of violence at a time.



But sometimes coercive control is not physical violence.

And sometimes it is many small acts over time.



People might not recognise when people use coercive control.



They might blame the person who is experiencing coercive control.

Or they might think that the person experiencing coercive control is the person using it.



All of this can make it hard for people to:

- know they are experiencing coercive control
- get support.

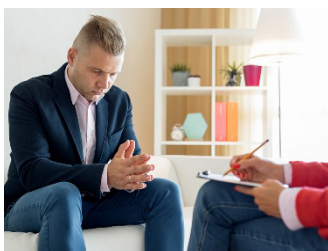


It can also make it harder for services to:

- give the right support
- understand how to help people.



People who use coercive control might take advantage of this.



Not understanding coercive control can also make it harder for people who use coercive control to:

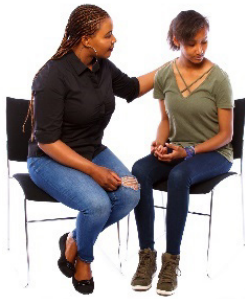
- recognise that they are using coercive control
- get help to change their behaviour.

Principle 5. Respecting lived experience

When someone has **lived experience** of coercive control, they:



- have experienced coercive control



- know what life can be like for people who experience coercive control



- can share what happened to them to help others.



It's important to listen to people with lived experience when we make plans to address coercive control.



It will help us make sure people are getting the support they need.

This includes different groups of people with lived experience, such as:



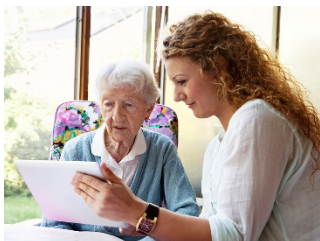
- people with disability



- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples



- children and young people



- older people.



We also need to work with **culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)** people with lived experience of coercive control.

CALD people:

- come from different backgrounds
- speak languages other than English.

We also need to work with **LGBTQIA+** people with lived experience of coercive control.



The letters LGBTQIA stand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex and asexual.

The '+' is for people who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community but don't talk about themselves using a word from this list.



We need to think about the experiences of people who:

- are killed by the people who use coercive control
- take their own life.

This can help us understand what services people need.



Family members and friends can also help us understand what support people need.

Principle 6. Working together



All governments must work together to:

- stop coercive control before it happens
- respond to coercive control
- support people who experience it.



To do this, we must all understand coercive control in the same way.

And we must have information and records that can help us.



People from different areas and services must work together to support people who experience coercive control.

This includes:



- government services



- the community



- businesses



- families.

There isn't just one way to address coercive control.

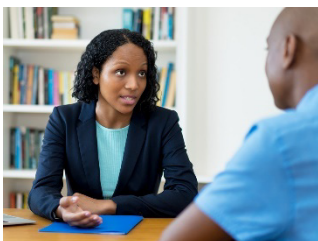
But everyone should work together to make sure:

- services work well
- there aren't gaps in services.



Services must also work with people who use coercive control to help them:

- understand their behaviour
- change their behaviour.



Principle 7.

How the justice system responds to coercive control



Justice systems are different in each state and territory.

But they all have ways to respond to family and domestic violence.

The justice system includes the police, courts and the law.



Each state and territory government can decide if coercive control should be a crime.

They must work with people with lived experience when they make this decision.



They should also think about:

- how the law would work
- how it works with the principles.



And they should also recognise that this is only one part of addressing coercive control.



The justice system works best when everyone has training to understand how the law affects people.



State and territory governments should make sure they protect people who experience coercive control.



Making coercive control a crime should not:

- make things harder for people who experience coercive control
- put them at risk.



Governments should also think about how to make sure laws don't affect the wrong people.



And they should think about protecting groups of people who are more at risk.

Help and support



There are people and services who can support you.



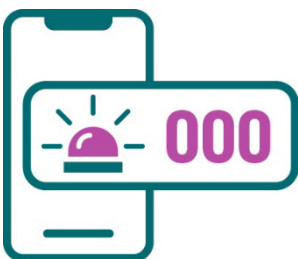
You can talk to someone you trust, such as a:

- family member
- friend.



There are also organisations who can help.

We have included some free services below.



If you're in an emergency now, call Triple Zero.

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1800 RESPECT



1800 RESPECT can support you if you are experiencing family and domestic violence.



You can call them any time.

1800 737 732



You can visit their website.

www.1800respect.org.au

Lifeline



If anything in this guide has upset you, Lifeline can support you.



You can call them any time.

13 11 14



You can also visit their website.

www.lifeline.org.au

13YARN



13YARN is a support service run by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



You can call them any time.

13 92 76



You can also visit their website.

www.13yarn.org.au

National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline



You can use this hotline to report:

- violence against people with disability
- someone treating a person with disability badly.



You can call them.

1800 880 052



They are open:

- 9 am to 9 pm, Monday to Friday
- 10 am to 4 pm on weekends and public holidays.

MensLine Australia



MensLine Australia supports men with their behaviour and wellbeing.



You can call them any time.

1300 78 99 78



You can visit their website.

www.mensline.org.au

National Relay Service



If you need support to speak or listen, you can use the National Relay Service.



You can call them any time.

1800 555 660



Then you can give them the phone number you want them to call.



You can also visit their website.

www.relayservice.com.au

Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS)



If you speak a language other than English,

TIS can help you:

- talk to someone
- understand what they are saying.



You can call TIS any time.

131 450



You can visit their website.

www.tisnational.gov.au

Word list

This list explains what the **bold** words in this document mean.



Abuse

Abuse is when someone treats you badly.



Coercive control

Coercive control is when someone treats another person badly over time.

They do this to:

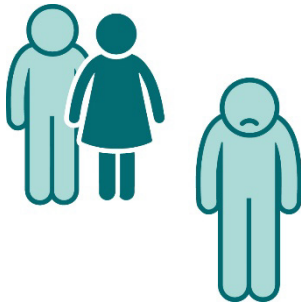
- give themselves power
- control the other person.



Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)

CALD people:

- come from different backgrounds
- speak languages other than English.



Discrimination

Discrimination is when people treat you unfairly because of a part of who you are.

This includes how services treat you.



Family and domestic violence

Family and domestic violence is when someone close to you hurts you, such as:

- your partner
- a member of your family
- someone who takes care of you
- someone you live with.



Justice system

The justice system includes the police, courts and the law.



Intersectionality

Intersectionality happens when the different experiences of people:

- overlap
- affect each other.

LGBTQIA+



The letters LGBTQIA stand for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex and asexual.

The '+' is for people who are part of the LGBTQIA+ community but don't talk about themselves using a word from this list.

Lived experience

When someone has lived experience of coercive control, they:



- have experienced coercive control



- know what life can be like for people who experience coercive control



- can share what happened to them to help others.



Principles

Principles are important ideas that tell us how to make things better.



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