

What is coercive control?

Coercive control refers to one or more types of abusive behaviour that form a pattern of behaviour by a person to intimidate and control the lives of others – the victims/survivors.ⁱ Coercive control is a type of domestic and family violence (DFV).

Why is coercive control so serious?

Coercive control is linked to increased risks of serious harm being caused to others by the person using control,ⁱⁱ including homicide.ⁱⁱⁱ

What does coercive control look like?

DFV, including coercive control, doesn't have to be physical. It may include, but is not limited to:^{iv}

- Financial abuse, e.g. taking or controlling the other person's income
- Monitoring, e.g. using tracking devices to monitor the whereabouts of the other person, or calling and texting frequently to check on their location and who they are with
- Isolating, e.g. preventing the targeted person from leaving the home including for medical appointments, or preventing them from going to work, and controlling who they spend time with
- Reproductive coercion, e.g. attempting to control the other person through pregnancy
- Threats and intimidation, e.g. threatening to harm themselves or others, including companion animals, if the victim/survivor does not meet the demands of the perpetrator or reaches out for help

What are some of the signs of coercive control?

There are a range of signs and symptoms of coercive control which might be noticed in the victim/survivor. These include both physical and emotional signs and symptoms, which may include (but are not limited to):^v

- Needing to check with their partner or other person before spending money
- Being frequently interrupted by calls or texts (including while at work), e.g. texts/calls checking where they are, who they are with and when they will be home
- Being unable to go anywhere or attend any event without their partner or other person using coercive control being present
- Tiredness or exhaustion, which may result from the stress or impacts of coercive control
- Anxiety, including seeming fearful of their partner or another person, including indicating they are afraid to go home from work

A legislative response to coercive control

Queensland is considering legislating against coercive control,^{vi} and it is essential that a considered approach is taken to developing an effective legislative response. Appropriate legislation is one possible response amongst a range of strategies to prevent and respond to coercive control and DFV. We need comprehensive education programs in our schools, workplaces and communities. Adequate funding for social and community organisations is essential, as is training and resourcing for police officers and other first responders to DFV.

What can I do?

The issue of DFV can seem overwhelming. There are many steps that you can take to help our communities end the scourge of domestic and family violence.

1. If you notice that someone you know might be experiencing or using coercive control, reach out for information and support from a local DFV support service
2. Contact Basic Rights Queensland to arrange free DFV Work Aware training for your workplace <https://brq.org.au/contact/>
3. Join your union and participate in the We Won't Wait Campaign <https://www.australianunions.org.au/wewontwaitdv>
4. Stay up to date with research and developments in response to DFV, from organisations such as [ANROWS](#), [OurWatch](#) and [QCDFVR](#)

Who can I contact for support?

- **DV Connect** 1800 811 811 (24/7 in Queensland)
- **1800 RESPECT** 1800 737 732 (24/7 Australia wide)
- **MensLine Australia** 1300 789 978 (24/7 Australia wide)
- Your local DFV service: <https://www.qld.gov.au/community/getting-support-health-social-issue/support-victims-abuse/domestic-family-violence/find-local-support>

ⁱ Queensland Health. (2020). *Understanding Domestic and Family Violence* [Booklet]. Domestic and family violence (DFV) resources to support the health workforce.

https://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/952072/1_Understanding-DFV-Booklet.pdf

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

ⁱⁱⁱ Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board. (2019). *2018-2019 Annual Report*. Queensland Government. https://www.courts.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/630159/domestic-and-family-violence-death-review-and-advisory-board-annual-report-2018-19.pdf

^{iv} *Ibid.*; SafeLives. (2019). *Marac Guidance – Scotland. Coercive Control*. [Booklet]. Resources for professionals in Scotland. <https://safelives.org.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Guidance%20for%20Maracs%20-%20Corecive%20Control%20-%20Scotland.pdf>

^v Queensland Health. (2020). *Understanding Domestic and Family Violence* [Booklet]. Domestic and family violence (DFV) resources to support the health workforce.

https://www.health.qld.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0025/952072/1_Understanding-DFV-Booklet.pdf

^{vi} Queensland Government. (2020, October 4). *Palaszczuk Government to get coercive control right* [Media statement]. <https://statements.qld.gov.au/statements/90986>