

Parliament of Victoria

Coercive control offence: a jurisdictional comparison

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Research Note

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Content warning: This Note contains information that some readers may find distressing as it refers to family, domestic and sexual violence.

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Executive summary

If the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026 ('the Bill') passes parliament, Victoria will be the fourth Australian jurisdiction to criminalise a standalone coercive control offence, reflecting its commitment to the National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence. Attorney-General Sonya Kilkenney described coercive control in her second reading speech as:

... an insidious form of abuse used, usually by a man, to intimidate, humiliate, surveil, gaslight or isolate another person, usually a female intimate partner, and strip them of their sense of autonomy and self-worth so as to have control over them.¹

This paper only considers one aspect of the Bill, which contains a number of other reforms. It provides a brief explanation of the context and key issues surrounding coercive control and a jurisdictional comparison showing how other Australian states and territories have addressed or are addressing this issue.

For more information on coercive control, please see the following Victorian Parliamentary Library publications:

- [What is coercive control?](#)
- [Intersectional complexities of coercive control](#)

An accompanying research note from the Library, *Good character in sentencing: a jurisdictional comparison*, provides a similar overview and comparison of the Bill's provisions that remove the consideration of 'good character' from sentencing.

¹ S. Kilkenney, Attorney-General (2026) 'Second reading: Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026', *Debates [Proof]*, Victoria, Legislative Assembly, 12 August, pp. 81-84, p. 81.

1 | Context and key issues

In September 2023, the Standing Council of Attorneys-General agreed to the National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence. The principles established a ‘shared understanding about the common features and impacts of coercive control, and guiding considerations to inform responses’.²

The principles do not prescribe methods of implementation through laws or other measures, but they stipulate that jurisdictions’ responses should: embed the lived experience of victim-survivors; define roles and responsibilities throughout the service system that are clearly understood and coordinated; and embed in any legislative reform the shared understanding of coercive control as set out in the principles. New South Wales and Queensland have enacted standalone coercive control offences, while South Australia’s amending Act introducing the offence has not yet commenced.

Recent developments in Victoria

In November 2025, the Liberal-National opposition announced an election commitment of criminalising coercive control as a standalone offence.³ The opposition’s attempt to legislate this measure through its Crimes Amendment (Coercive Control) Bill 2025 did not reach a vote, but on 3 December the House, including members of the government, supported a motion by Shadow Minister for Health Georgie Crozier calling on the government to ‘urgently expedite the passage of coercive control laws’.⁴ The same day, the Attorney-General stated the government would legislate to criminalise coercive control as a standalone offence in 2026, indicating that more needed to be done to strengthen existing laws.⁵

A new standalone offence of coercive control

The government is seeking to make coercive control a standalone offence through Part 6 of the Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026.⁶ It would apply where an adult engages in conduct intended to coerce or control an intimate partner more than once or in a protracted way, and where they ‘ought to understand ... that the course of conduct will probably cause harm’ to their intimate partner.⁷ Several kinds of conduct are listed as constituting coercive control, including ‘emotional or psychological abuse’ and ‘economic abuse’ (see Table 1 for more detail).⁸ A new definition for ‘harm’ includes both physical and mental harm, while the definition of ‘intimate partner’ would include spouses, domestic partners and intimate personal relationships, whether sexual or not.⁹ The Attorney-General will be required to commence a review of the coercive control provisions of the Bill within three years of commencement, which must consider whether the offence should apply to relationships other than intimate partners.¹⁰

² Standing Council of Attorneys-General (2023) *National Principles to Address Coercive Control in Family and Domestic Violence*, 22 September, Attorney-General’s Department, Commonwealth of Australia, p. ii.

³ S. Deery (2025) ‘Coalition tackles coercion’, *Herald Sun*, 28 November, p. 5.

⁴ G. Crozier, Shadow Minister for Health (2025) ‘Motions: Family Violence’, *Debates*, Victoria, Legislative Council, 3 December, p. 5541.

⁵ B. Kolovos (2025) ‘Victorian Labor to introduce stand-alone coercive control offence in backflip to match opposition policy’, *The Guardian Australia*, 3 December.

⁶ B. Carroll, Premier (2026) *Labor protects victim-survivors with landmark new laws*, media release, 11 August.

⁷ Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026, new section 34AR.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ *ibid.*, new ss 34AP, 34AQ.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, new s 34AU.

2 | Jurisdictional comparison

Table 1: Existing or incoming legislation relating to coercive control as a standalone offence in Australian jurisdictions.

	Standalone offence?	Legislation (In force & amending)	Specified conduct and applicable penalty	Recent inquiries / reports / government commitments
Victoria	No (Proposed, not yet enacted)	<i>Crimes Act 1958</i> Justice Legislation Amendment (Family Violence, Coercive Control, Good Character, Risk Assessment and Other Matters) Bill 2026	New section 34AR Coercive Control (1) A person (A) commits an offence if— (a) A is an adult; and (b) A is or has been an intimate partner of another person (B); and (c) A engages in a course of conduct towards B as set out in subsection (3); and (d) A intends, by engaging in the course of conduct, to coerce or control B; and (e) A ought to understand, in all the particular circumstances, that the course of conduct will probably cause harm to B. The perpetrator's conduct must be on more than one occasion or done in a protracted way with 'a continuity of purpose' towards the victim-survivor (subsection (3)). Conduct constituting coercive control would include: physical abuse; sexual abuse; emotional or psychological abuse; economic abuse; threats of abuse; and any other conduct that coerces or controls the victim-survivor and causes them to fear for their or another's safety or wellbeing. Examples of economic abuse (new section 34AN) listed in the Bill include where the accused incurs debts in the name of the victim-survivor or prevents them from seeking or keeping employment. Examples of emotional or psychological abuse (new section 34AO) listed in the Bill include where the accused prevents or restricts the victim-survivor from making or maintaining relationships with family members, making friends or maintaining friendships, or tracks or monitors B's movements or activities. Penalty: Level 5 imprisonment (10 years maximum)	

	Standalone offence?	Legislation (In force & amending)	Specified conduct and applicable penalty	Recent inquiries / reports / government commitments
Australian Capital Territory	No (Proposed, not yet enacted)	<i>Crimes Act 1900</i> <i>Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2026</i>	Section 72J Coercive control of family member (1) A person commits an offence if (a) the person is an adult; and (b) the person engages in a course of conduct consisting of family violence against a family member of the person; and (c) the person intends the course of conduct to coerce or control the family member; and (d) a reasonable person would, in all the circumstances, consider the course of conduct likely to result in harm to, or fear of harm in, the family member or someone else. Penalty: Up to 7 years imprisonment	The Standing Committee on Legal Affairs' Inquiry into Crimes (Coercive Control) Amendment Bill 2026 commenced on 2 June 2026. They are due to table their report on 11 September 2026.
New South Wales	Yes	<i>Crimes Act 1900</i> <i>Crimes Legislation Amendment (Coercive Control) Act 2022</i>	Section 54D Abusive behaviour towards current or former intimate partners (1) An adult commits an offence if (a) the adult engages in a course of conduct against another person that consists of abusive behaviour, and (b) the adult and other person are or were intimate partners, and (c) the adult intends the course of conduct to coerce or control the other person, and (d) a reasonable person would consider the course of conduct would be likely, in all the circumstances, to cause any or all of the following, whether or not the fear or impact is in fact caused— (i) fear that violence will be used against the other person or another person, or (ii) a serious adverse impact on the capacity of the other person to engage in some or all of the person's ordinary day-to-day activities. Penalty: Up to 7 years imprisonment	The offence targets coercive control, but the Act defines the relevant conduct as 'abusive behaviour' with the intention 'to coerce or control the other person'.

	Standalone offence?	Legislation (In force & amending)	Specified conduct and applicable penalty	Recent inquiries / reports / government commitments
Northern Territory	No	<i>Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007</i>	Section 5B Coercive control (1) Coercive control, of a person, is a pattern of conduct that causes the person to fear for their safety, or the safety of another person in a domestic relationship with the person engaging in the conduct, that results in any of the following: (a) controlling or subordinating the person; (b) dominating, regulating or monitoring the person's daily activity; (c) isolating the person from social, familial or cultural connections and support; (d) depriving the person of freedom; (e) frightening, humiliating, degrading or punishing the person.	While coercive control is included in the <i>Domestic and Family Violence Act</i> , it is not a standalone criminal offence.
Queensland	Yes	<i>Criminal Code Act 1899</i> <i>Criminal Law (Coercive Control and Affirmative Consent) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024</i> <i>Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023</i>	Section 334 Coercive Control (1) A person who is an adult commits an offence (a coercive control offence) if— (a) the person is in a domestic relationship with another person (the other person); and (b) the person engages in a course of conduct against the other person that consists of domestic violence occurring on more than 1 occasion; and (c) the person intends the course of conduct to coerce or control the other person; and (d) the course of conduct would, in all the circumstances, be reasonably likely to cause the other person harm. Limited to a person in a domestic relationship and only applies to those over the age of 18. Included in the definition of 'domestic violence' is 'emotionally or psychologically abusive', 'economically abusive' and 'is coercive'. Examples of economic abuse included in the Act include: 'coercing a person to relinquish control over assets and income' or 'preventing a person from seeking or keeping employment' Penalty: up to 14 years imprisonment	Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce 2021 report <i>Hear her voice: Addressing coercive control and domestic and family violence in Queensland, Vol. 1, Vol. 2 & Vol 3</i>. Following a taskforce recommendation, the 2023 Act also updated the definitions of 'domestic violence', 'emotional or psychological abuse' and 'economic abuse' in the <i>Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012</i> to include reference to a 'pattern of behaviour'.

	Standalone offence?	Legislation (In force & amending)	Specified conduct and applicable penalty	Recent inquiries / reports / government commitments
South Australia	Yes (not yet commenced)	<i>Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935</i> <i>Criminal Law Consolidation (Coercive Control) Amendment Act 2025</i>	New s 20C—Coercive control (1) A person is guilty of the offence of coercive control if— (a) the person engages in a course of conduct that consists of behaviour that has, or that a reasonable person would consider is likely to have, a controlling impact on another person; and (b) the person intends by that course of conduct to have a controlling impact on the other person; and (c) the person is, or was, in a relationship with the other person; and (d) a reasonable person would consider the course of conduct to be likely to cause the other person— (i) physical harm; or (ii) psychological harm, (whether temporary or permanent). In this instance ‘controlling impact’ would include, among other things, restricting: • freedom of movement • access to the justice system or support services • access to basic necessities. Penalty: 7 years imprisonment	The Act has not yet commenced

	Standalone offence?	Legislation (In force & amending)	Specified conduct and applicable penalty	Recent inquiries / reports / government commitments
Tasmania	No	<i>Family Violence Act 2004</i>	Section 7 Family violence (1) In this Act – <i>family violence</i> means – (a) any of the following types of conduct committed by a person, directly or indirectly, against that person's spouse or partner: ... (ii) threats, coercion, intimidation or verbal abuse;... (d) any conduct committed by a person that causes the death or neglect of, or injury to, an animal that, directly or indirectly – ... (i) intimidates, coerces or controls the person's spouse or partner; or ... (e) any threats made by a person regarding the potential death or neglect of, or injury to, an animal that, directly or indirectly – ... (i) intimidates, coerces or controls the person's spouse or partner; or ... (f) any conduct referred to in paragraph (d) or threats referred to in paragraph (e) by a person that the person knows, or reasonably ought to know, is likely to, directly or indirectly – ... (i) intimidate, coerce or control the person's spouse or partner; or ... Section 8 Economic abuse A person must not, with intent to unreasonably control or intimidate his or her spouse or partner or cause his or her spouse or partner mental harm, apprehension or fear, pursue a course of conduct made up of one or more of the following actions: (a) coercing his or her spouse or partner to relinquish control over assets or income ... Penalty: fine not exceeding 40 penalty units or imprisonment for a term not exceeding 2 years	Department of Justice's 2025 discussion paper <i>Strengthening Our Responses to Family Violence in Tasmania: Family Violence Act 2004 and Related Legislation</i>. The Government announced in May 2026 that they will 'clarify the <i>Family Violence Act 2004</i> to more effectively capture the patterns of behaviours in the coercive control provisions'. As of August 2026, no Bill had been introduced.

	Standalone offence?	Legislation (In force & amending)	Specified conduct and applicable penalty	Recent inquiries / reports / government commitments
Western Australia	No	<i>Restraining Orders Act 1997</i> <i>Family Violence Legislation Reform Act 2024</i>	Section 5A Term used: family violence (1) A reference in this Act to <i>family violence</i> is a reference to — ... (b) any other behaviour or pattern of behaviour by the person that coerces or controls the family member or causes the member to be fearful. (1A) Behaviour or a pattern of behaviour referred to in subsection (1)(b) — (a) may occur over a period of time; and (b) may be more than 1 act, or a series of acts, that when considered cumulatively coerces or controls the family member or causes the member to be fearful; and (c) is to be considered in the context of the relationship between the person and the family member as a whole. This definition is included in the context of the issuing of family violence restraining orders (FVROs), and associated penalties are for breaches of FVROs. Penalty: a fine of \$10,000 or 2 years imprisonment	Office of the Commissioner for Victims of Crime's (OCVC) 2023 consultations outcome report Legislative responses to coercive control in Western Australia. The 2023 OCVC report recommends considering the introduction of a new criminal offence addressing coercive control (recommendation 23). In May 2025, the Cook Labor Government confirmed that criminalising coercive control is one of its priorities.

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Crimes Act 1900 (ACT)

Crimes Act 1900 (NSW)

Crimes Act 1958 (Vic)

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Criminal Code Act 1899 (Qld)

Criminal Law (Coercive Control and Affirmative Consent) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2024 (Qld)

Criminal Law Consolidation (Coercive Control) Amendment Act 2025 (SA)

Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935 (SA)

Domestic and Family Violence Act 2007 (NT)

Domestic and Family Violence Protection (Combating Coercive Control) and Other Legislation Amendment Act 2023 (Qld)

Family Violence Act 2004 (Tas)

Family Violence Legislation Reform Act 2024 (WA)

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