

Response ID ANON-6CV1-PYZJ-D

Submitted to Consultation Draft – National Principles to Address Coercive Control
Submitted on 2022-11-10 09:20:05

Questions about you (or your organisation)

To continue with the survey, please confirm your agreement to the below declaration:

I agree:
Yes

What is your email address?

Email:
natalie.townsend@newcastle.edu.au

Are you responding to this survey as an individual or on behalf of your organisation?

Organisation

Organisation

Please enter the name of your organisation:

Organisation:
Centre for Women's Health Research, University of Newcastle

Which category best describes you/your organisation?

Research and academia

Other:

Where is your organisation based?

NSW

Questions about the draft National Principles

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

statement responses - The draft National Principles effectively describe the common features of coercive control.:
Disagree

statement responses - The draft National Principles effectively describe the impacts of coercive control.:
Disagree

statement responses - The draft National Principles effectively describe the key issues associated with a lack of understanding of coercive control.:
Disagree

statement responses - The draft National Principles effectively describe the impact of discrimination and inequality in the context of coercive control.:
Disagree

statement responses - The draft National Principles effectively describe the importance of listening to and working with victim-survivors of family and domestic violence.:
Agree

statement responses - The draft National Principles effectively describe the key elements needed to effectively address coercive control.:
Disagree

statement responses - The draft National Principles effectively describe the key issues to consider when deciding whether or how to criminalise coercive control.:
Agree

statement responses - The draft National Principles effectively describe the potential unintended consequences of criminalisation.:
Agree

statement responses - The draft National Principles are inclusive of a diverse range of experiences and voices.:
Disagree

Would you like to provide more information about your answers?

Please limit your response to no more than 500 words.:

Coercive control is an evolving area and so the common features will expand over time. This should be acknowledged within the first National Principle (NP1). Although coercive control is common within family and intimate partner relationships, it is also experienced within other relationships (e.g. coercive control can be experienced in the work environment). Similarly, there are more modern relationships that are subject to coercive control, such as those that take place over the internet. It is not just that coercive control can be perpetrated through technology, the relationship itself can be conducted using technology (e.g. catfishing). Although it is acknowledged that this is outside the scope of this work, providing a national definition of coercive control which is limited to specific scenarios limits its usefulness and is also not in line with NP5.

The impacts of coercive control included in NP2 are not comprehensive and should be referenced to an evidence base of research. Where there is no research and anecdotal evidence is being used, this should be noted and further research should be recommended. This is important since there are likely impacts that are currently unknown, and the understanding of flow on effects throughout life are similarly limited. Without quantifying these impacts, the effects of policy cannot be measured.

The key issues associated with a lack of understanding of coercive control (NP3) are very limited and insufficient. An evidence base of research should be used to identify the key issues associated with a lack of understanding of coercive control.

The impact of discrimination and inequality should be backed by an evidence base (NP4). It is also unclear if consultation with priority populations (e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people with disabilities, LGBTIQ+ community, culturally and linguistically diverse communities) have been undertaken to ensure their voices and experiences are considered within the NPs. NP4 requires further explanation, and as with other claims, should be referenced to an evidence base.

NP5 states the importance of listening to and working with victim-survivors of family and domestic violence. However, it is unclear whether or not the NPs have been developed in consultation with victim-survivors. It is also important to note that coercive control can exist outside family and domestic violence (e.g. within the workplace), and so all victim-survivors experiences should be considered, rather than those who experience this within one particular setting. The draft highlights children and young people but requires further consultation with older people, caregivers and people who receive care. These matters are highly complex and need careful consideration.

NP6 describes the different levels of intervention (e.g. prevention). However, the key elements needed to effectively address coercive control are not addressed.

It is unclear whether or not NPs are inclusive of a diverse range of experiences and voices, as experiences or voices that have been considered in drafting the NPs are not described. It is also unclear what consultation has been undertaken to ensure the included experiences are diverse.

Do you have any suggestions as to how governments could promote the final National Principles to increase awareness and understanding of coercive control?

Please limit your response to no more than 250 words.:

Any activities directed at awareness raising and promotion of understanding should be undertaken in partnership with activities planned for the National Plan. It is important to improve understanding of all forms of violence, rather than focusing on one specific type of violence.

High level guiding principles are an appropriate first step, however an action plan which outlines different steps that can be undertaken to align with the National Principles is needed. This will ensure the National Principles are used and implemented.

Do you have any other feedback on the draft National Principles?

Please limit your response to no more than 500 words.:

The National Principles do not appear to be informed by an evidence base of research. There is no reference to research, so the origin and validity of the claims are unclear. As noted in the draft, there is limited understanding and awareness of coercive control, and the concept has not been thoroughly researched. There is no way of saying whether or not the identified National Principles are sound without an evidence base to support them. It is unclear whether or not a scoping of the existing research has been undertaken to inform this document. If this has been done, the inclusion of references (as done in the National Plan) would be very helpful. In addition, it would be helpful to acknowledge where there is no or limited research to support a National Principle at this stage, and to note where further research is needed.

National data sources, such as the Australian Longitudinal Study on Women's Health (ALSWH) and the Personal Safety Survey, should be consulted regarding existing evidence, and also adding to the evidence base. For example, ALSWH have been collecting data on women's experiences of violence and abuse for over 25 years, and therefore have a wealth of data which can be used to for an evidence base and inform policy questions. The Study also continues to expand the violence dataset, so can continue to develop the evidence needed. For example, ALSWH has recently started collecting data on reproductive coercion. ALSWH findings could easily strengthen the evidence on the impacts of coercive control National Principle (NP2).

The National Principles document notes that a variety of principles need to be considered by multiple audiences. However, it is not clear how this should be done. An action plan needs to be developed to support further consultation on the development of the National Principles, and also implementation of the National Principles. The action plan should outline what will be done to ensure these National Principles are valid and can be incorporated, research should be conducted where an evidence base is needed, how to work with other groups and involve the lived experience should be outlined. National Principles without any kind of action associated with them will not be easily incorporated or implemented.

Your survey response