

Submission to the Second Action Plan Consultation

Evidence to Action: Informing Direction for the Second Action Plan, in support of the National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022–2032

Contact: [REDACTED] & [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], at EquiTech, JBC, Flinders University, <https://www.flinders.edu.au/jeff-bleich-centre/equittech>

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Introduction

We welcome the opportunity to submit to the Consultation on the Second Action Plan (National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032).

This submission draws on our current research and community practice with multicultural and faith communities and **focuses on coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse** as they are experienced by migrant, refugee, and individuals from diverse cultural, faith, and linguistic backgrounds and communities. In this submission, we refer in particular, to a current project funded by the Law Foundation of South Australia, titled “*Understanding and Addressing Coercive Control in Multicultural Communities: A Co-Designed Approach to Culturally Safe Prevention and Intervention*”. This project is being executed by Flinders University in partnership with Multicultural Communities Council of SA (MCCSA).

With coercive control now criminalised in South Australia and in other jurisdictions, we respond to a gap the Consultation Paper itself names: **the need to improve how coercive control is recognised and addressed, and to develop fast, effective responses to technology-facilitated abuse, in ways that are genuinely accessible to diverse communities**. We respond to Priority Areas 1, 2, 3 and 5.

We make this submission in our capacity as:

- Academics in Law and Criminology at Flinders University JBC’s *EquiTech: Multiculturalism, Gender, and Digital Justice*: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED].
- Service providers at **Multicultural Communities Council of SA (MCCSA)**: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], Chief Executive, and [REDACTED], Senior Project Officer.

Collectively, our research spans several decades and has established recognised expertise in the structural harms arising from the intersection of race, gender, migration, visa status,

culture, language, lack of equal opportunities and access to justice, particularly as they affect migrant, refugee, and multicultural and multifaith communities.

Currently, we are collecting qualitative data on understanding and experiences of coercive control in this diverse cohort. As coercive control is criminalised across various jurisdictions in Australia, this project addresses a critical gap between legal reform and community readiness. Coercive control is poorly understood and in many languages it even lacks an equivalent term. The multiple intersecting risks are already identified by key literature in Australia (for example, financial dependence, migration-related insecurity, limited legal awareness, language barriers, cultural and religious pressures, reproductive coercion, technology-facilitated abuse, remote living, and compounding vulnerabilities such as disability: Boxall & Morgan, 2021; DRC, 2020; Douglas, 2021; Ibrahim, 2022; Leyton Zamora, 2023; Marmo et al., 2023; Sarkar, 2023; Tarzia et al., 2022; Zannettino et al., 2023).

Yet, the lived experiences of coercive control of these cohorts remain critically under-researched and rarely reflected in mainstream legal or service frameworks (Beckwith et al., 2023). This exclusion increases likelihood of misidentification, ineffective responses, and barriers to justice.

This project is in partnership with the Multicultural Communities Council of South Australia (MCCSA) and received a grant from Law Foundation of South Australia.

Terminology

In this submission, we use terms such as people from multicultural and faith-diverse background. This type, or any type, of grouping is however difficult, as it does not offer justice to nuances and experiences.

We are deeply aware that migrant status is about visa and immigration standing, not about language or culture. Someone can face "visa as a weapon" of coercive control regardless of how linguistic or cultural fluent a person might be. Refugee status adds trauma from displacement and often deep wariness of authorities from experiences before arrival, independent of language ability. Second or third generations people from multicultural backgrounds may be citizens or permanent residents, whose barrier is that "coercive control" simply doesn't translate into their cultural or faith framework.

Priority Area 1: Victim-Survivors

What current or emerging issues should the Second Action Plan address, including in relation to coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse?

For migrant, refugee, and victim-survivors from multicultural and multifaith background, technology-facilitated abuse is rarely a separate problem from coercive control, it is frequently how coercive control is exercised. In our current work, this includes monitoring devices, restricting access to phones or the internet, controlling who a victim-survivor can contact, and using digital surveillance to track movement and communication. Because

technology is simultaneously the primary tool of control and the primary lifeline to family, community and support, generic advice such as "reduce screen time" or "change your passwords" can inadvertently deepen isolation. Coercive control also presents a conceptual and linguistic gap: it is a legal and clinical term that does not translate cleanly across languages or cultural frameworks. Without tailored community education, new offences risk being invisible to the communities most affected, or misapplied in ways that increase harm and mistrust.

What gaps remain in addressing the needs of diverse communities?

National surveys consistently under-sample recent migrant arrivals and people unable to participate in the available survey languages, which the evidence review underpinning this consultation itself acknowledges as a limitation of current data (ANROWS, 2026). Independent research fills part of this gap: a national study by Harmony Alliance and the Monash Migration and Inclusion Centre (2021) found that roughly one in three migrant and refugee women have experienced family and domestic violence, with temporary visa holders reporting disproportionately higher rates of controlling behaviour and migration-related threats. The eSafety Commissioner's research with women from multicultural and multifaith background (2019) similarly found that culturally specific shame, fear of deportation, and low trust in state institutions rooted in experiences in countries of origin are primary barriers to help-seeking, compounded by limited digital literacy. Despite this evidence, in-language resources, co-designed prevention programs, and workforce training specific to communities from multicultural and multifaith background remain patchy and under-resourced.

Priority Area 2: Prevention and Early Intervention

What prevention and early intervention approaches appear most promising, and what is needed to strengthen them?

Co-designed, community-led prevention, developed with community leaders, bicultural workers and faith leaders, rather than delivered to communities, makes the greatest difference. Our current work with multicultural communities (Indian, Italian, Chinese) and faith groups (Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Buddhist), is built on this premise: legal education is only effective when it reflects cultural realities alongside legal accuracy. Our research is also showing that technology-facilitated coercive control is often not initially recognised within a relationship, it can be normalised as care, protectiveness, or cultural expectation, and is frequently named as abuse only after it has escalated. Prevention efforts, including digital literacy programs, need to help communities recognise these patterns early rather than only after harm has intensified.

What emerging issues should the Second Action Plan address?

There is a real risk that legal reforms criminalising coercive control outpace community understanding, leaving newly protected groups unable to access or trust the protections intended for them.

This is further exacerbated by variations in the legal definitions of domestic and family violence across federal and state legislation, including differences between criminal definitions of coercive control and their counterparts in the *Family Law Act 1975* (Cth) and state intervention order legislation may compound existing issues of translation and understanding. These variations in the legal definitions may lead to further and avoidable difficulties in the effectiveness of prevention, early intervention and implementation measures. A practical example here is that multicultural leading groups and multicultural faith leaders cannot support each others across States in exchanging linguistic and cultural interpretation, case studies, how-to resources, among other issues.

Priority Area 3: Children and Young People in Their Own Right

Children from multicultural and multifaith communities can be drawn into technology-facilitated coercive control in specific ways, for example, being used to translate, or having their own devices used by a parent to track a former partner's whereabouts. Responses need to recognise children as both potentially affected by, and sometimes instrumentalised within, tech-facilitated abuse. This requires interpreters and bicultural workers trained specifically in child-focused family violence practice, not general interpreting, and culturally responsive training for teachers and health workers, who are often the first point of contact for children. ANROWS's *In Their Own Right* (Gillfeather-Spetere & Watson, 2024) sets out priority actions for children's safety that remain to be fully implemented for children and young people specifically; we support extending existing child and youth engagement mechanisms to include and distinguish multicultural and faith community voices, which are otherwise largely absent from national engagement processes.

Priority Area 5: System Integration and Workforce

The biggest gain for coordination would be formal pathways connecting legal practitioners, bicultural workers, multicultural informal frontline DFSV workers, faith leaders and specialist services, so that a disclosure to a trusted community figure leads to coordinated support rather than a dead end. This requires mandated, ongoing training, not a one-off module, for legal and formal and informal frontline practitioners on how coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse present across cultural and faith contexts, kept in step with law reform. Our current project's model, bringing community leaders, bicultural workers, and legal practitioners together to co-design resources and training, is one approach to embedding this collaboration more widely. Sustained funding for in-language resource development, bicultural workforce roles, and interpreter training specific to family and sexual violence contexts remains a core system gap.

Recommendations

At a time when laws criminalising coercive control have just been introduced in South Australia, the project addresses the gap between legal reform and community readiness, engaging three multicultural communities (Indian, Italian and Chinese) and five faith groups (Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian and Buddhist), several of which have no direct conceptual translation for "coercive control". Working with community and faith leaders, bicultural



workers and legal practitioners, the project co-designs prevention strategies and legal education resources that build legal literacy while reflecting cultural realities, through workshops, resource development and practitioner training.

We raise this project because it speaks directly to a risk the Consultation Paper identifies but does not yet resolve: that **reform on coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse will not reach the communities who need it most without deliberate, co-designed, in-language and in-culture translation of both the law and the support system around it.**

Summary of Recommendations

1. Fund co-designed, in-language legal education and prevention resources on coercive control for migrant, refugee, faith, and established communities from multicultural background, developed with community and faith leaders. This should include examples that make sense to these communities (rather than one-fit-all approach).
2. Mandate ongoing (not one-off), evidence-based training for legal, justice and frontline practitioners, as well as community and faith leaders, on recognising and responding to coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse across diverse cultural and faith contexts.
3. Recognise technology-facilitated abuse as a primary mechanism of coercive control in migrant and refugee households, and ensure digital safety guidance does not increase isolation from support networks.
4. Extend national child and youth engagement processes to include multicultural and faith community voices, and progress ANROWS's *In Their Own Right* priority actions for children from multicultural and multifaith background specifically.
5. Invest in evidence-building on how coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse are understood and experienced within specific multicultural and faith communities, the gap our SA Law Foundation- funded research is addressing.

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