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Rosie Batty, Jess Hill and key domestic and family violence advocates warn lack of consultation with victim-survivors may lead to disastrous consequences

Over 220 domestic and family violence workers and advocates from around New South Wales, including Rosie Batty, Jess Hill and Yvonne Weldon have called for a second round of consultation for the draft coercive control bill, including significant consultation with victim-survivors, after signing an open letter that outlined dangerous flaws in the current proposed legislation. The short six-week consultation period closes at midnight tonight, despite ongoing advocacy for a longer consultation period.

“Coercive control is an insidious form of domestic and family violence that often leads up to the physical abuse,” says domestic and family violence advocate Rosie Batty. “If criminalisation is not given enough time for consultation with victim-survivors and experts in the field, the complex legislation has the potential to re-traumatise the people it was designed to protect.”

Victim-survivor of family violence and advocate Talie Star says she was disappointed and alarmed there was no consultation with victim-survivors of abuse. “So many victim-survivors are not even included in the protections of this Bill, let alone the creating of it. As it is, this Bill could have far-reaching consequences of misidentification, silencing victim survivors and potentially more deaths. This legislation is supposed to be about empowering and protecting those experiencing violence, which in its current form fails to do so.”

The open letter outlines three main concerns with the draft Bill, each a flaw that could enable perpetrators of violence to find significant loopholes. They include:

1. The lack of a singular, concise definition of coercive control,
2. The omission of family and other violence,
3. The absence of an independent coercive control implementation taskforce

“Our justice systems are already overwhelmed dealing with current offences, with court dates more than 12 months in advance in some areas,” says Elise Phillips, Interim CEO of Domestic Violence NSW. “The draft bill aims to provide justice for victim-survivors, but rushed legislation increases the risk that the prosecution will struggle to provide sufficient evidence to prove coercive control beyond reasonable doubt, which will result in low conviction rates. We must ensure any new legislation is done with adequate planning, training and consultation.

Family violence activist and disability advocate Nicole Lee agrees that the limited scope of the draft Bill fails to recognise all the relationships that we have in our lives - especially for disabled people - where abuse can and does happen. “It’s disappointing to see such a complex piece of legislation being drafted that will later need to be retrofitted,” says Ms Lee. “It’s also troubling to see that other systems responses that should be going hand in hand with a new law such as this not being addressed alongside it to safeguard the community as much as possible from unintended consequences.”

“The entire process is being rushed, and the NSW Government is not heading the warning from researchers and experts, both nationally and internationally,” says Ms Lee.

You can read the full open letter and the list of signatures [here](#).

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Domestic Violence NSW is the peak body for specialist domestic and family violence services in NSW. DVNSW provides a representative and advocacy function for specialist services and the women, families and communities they support. Their mission is to eliminate domestic and family violence through leadership in policy, advocacy, partnerships and the promotion of best practice.

If you or someone you know is experiencing domestic violence help can be found via:

- **1800RESPECT** or 1800 737 732 which offers a national counselling helpline, information and support
- **NSW Domestic Violence Line** 1800 65 64 63 which offers a state-wide counselling helpline, information and support
- **Men’s Referral Service** 1300 766 491 for men, or friends and family of men using violence
- **National Violence and Abuse Trauma Counselling and Recovery Service** on 1800 FULL STOP (1800 385 578) or [online](#) for 24/7, free, confidential counselling.