

Presentation title:

## The benefits and risks of the criminalization of coercive control from the victim-survivor perspective

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Debate and law reform activity surrounding the need to criminalize coercive and controlling behaviours has spanned the globe. Those in favour of criminalization argue that the law sets the standard for acceptable behaviour. Others urge caution, noting that law reforms introduced to improve responses to different forms of violence against women have historically brought about unintended consequences which undermine women's access to justice. New criminal offences of coercive control have been introduced to varying degrees over the last 10 years across the UK, Europe and most recently have been proposed in Australia. Coercive control is a term used to capture the long-term, ongoing nature of a wide range of forms of violence which are not exclusively physical but can pervade an individual's daily lives with devastating impact. Debates surrounding the criminalization of coercive control have occurred largely in the absence of any significant evidence as to the views of victim-survivors of domestic and family violence. Drawing on the findings of an Australian study of victim-survivors views on the criminalization of coercive control, this presentation draws from the findings from a national survey of over 1200 victim-survivors, and in-depth follow up interviews conducted with 170 victim-survivors. Presenting the quantitative and qualitative findings, the presentation will explore victim-survivor views on the role of law, including their views on the benefits of criminalizing coercive control, perceived risks of the criminalization agenda, as well as the (potential) impacts of criminalization on perpetrator accountability, and justice and safety outcomes for victim-survivors of domestic abuse.