



ATSILS
Aboriginal and
Torres Strait Islander
Legal Service (Qld) Ltd

ATSILS Quick Guide Coercive Control in QLD



What is coercive control?

Coercive control is a **pattern of behaviour that tries to dominate, isolate, or control** someone in a relationship. **It's not just physical or sexual violence**—it can include emotional, financial, and psychological abuse.

Examples of behaviours towards someone in a domestic relationship with you ?

- Stopping someone from seeing friends or family;
- Controlling their money or banking;
- Constantly checking where they are or who they talk to;
- 'Jealousing' them or accusing them of cheating regularly;
- Threatening harm to them, their children, or pets;
- Threatening to harm yourself or commit suicide;
- Making them question/doubt their memory or sanity (gaslighting);
- Restricting them using a phone or car, or leaving the house; or
- Repeatedly contacting them to pressure or intimidate them.

Who can be charged?

- Adults (18+) who engage in a pattern of behaviour against a current or former partner, family member, or informal carer with intent to coerce or control them.
- The **behaviour must occur more than once and be reasonably likely to cause them harm**- this can be physical, sexual, emotional/psychological, or financial.
- Maximum penalty: 14 years imprisonment.

Be aware- being domestically violent to help a respondent is also now a crime

It is also illegal for friends and family of the respondent on a DVO to 'help' them by being abusive or violent to a protected person (aggrieved), on their behalf. If you do this, you can be charged by police with a criminal offence (maximum 3 years imprisonment).

Why does this matter for women in prison?

- Past behaviour before 26 May 2025 is not criminalised, but patterns of behaviour starting after that date can lead to new criminal charges.
- If you are in prison for domestic violence-related offences, future behaviour (letters, calls, messages) that seeks to control or intimidate a partner or family member could be considered coercive control by police.
- Breaching DVO's combined with controlling behaviour may now attract additional criminal charges under this new law of coercive control.
- Knowledge is important- because coercive control often is not an obvious pattern of behaviour. What maybe feels to you like "staying in touch" can be considered by police to be coercive control if it involves monitoring, threats, or manipulation of someone.

How to avoid being charged with this offence

- Think before you contact someone outside prison:
 - Do not make threats or demands.
 - Do not try to control their choices or movements.
- If you have a Domestic Violence Order (DVO) and you are the respondent on that order, follow it strictly.
- If you're unsure whether something is okay, **get legal advice first - call ATSILS.**

Where to get help/support

- DV Connect: 1800 811 811
- 1800 RESPECT: 1800 737 732
- Relationships Australia: 1300 364 277
- Speak to prison staff about programs on:
 - Healthy relationships
 - Domestic violence prevention

ATSILS is a non-profit, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-based organisation with 25 locations across Queensland. We provide innovative and professional legal services covering criminal, civil and family law areas.

Freecall 24/7  1800 012 255