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MEDIA RELEASE

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inTouch Calls for Coercive Control Reform Across Family Violence Sector

In a position paper released today, inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence has called for a number of crucial, sector-wide changes to support the criminalisation of coercive control.

Coercive control is a deliberate pattern of abuse occurring within intimate relationships, consisting of emotional and psychological manipulation, such as intimidation, stalking, surveillance and isolation. It is commonly used in instances of family violence and is almost always a precursor to serious physical violence or homicide.

The paper makes a number of recommendations informed by the organisation's 36 years of experience working with refugee and migrant victim-survivors of family violence.

"Criminalising coercive control is a key step in understanding how family violence is perpetrated in our community," inTouch CEO, Michal Morris said. "Generally, violence and abuse can take many forms including ongoing and persistent emotional abuse and control, but our current response system reacts to individual incidents that are largely physical in nature. Criminalisation would allow us to respond more comprehensively to a pattern of behaviour, ensuring that victim-survivors have a clear path to safety, justice and recovery."

While the organisation supports the criminalisation, inTouch also recognises that any future coercive control legislation could have an adverse effect on some of the country's most vulnerable populations. In order to circumvent this, the position paper strongly emphasises the importance of widespread consultation, training, education and policy change across both family violence response sectors and the community.

"Too often, we see the detrimental effects of over-policing and racial profiling on marginalised communities," Ms. Morris said. "In order for coercive control legislation to be equitable and effective, there are significant structural and systemic issues that must be addressed. Crucially, the first step government should undertake is a broad and thorough consultation across the community. Without a nuanced and educated application, legislation could have the potential to harm those it is intended to help."

Issues covered in the position paper include:

- The potential for the criminalisation of coercive control to improve judicial responses to family violence and contribute to the reduction of harm



- Changing community attitudes towards controlling patterns of behaviour in relationships
- The possible effect of criminalisation on refugee and migrant communities and the steps required to encourage positive outcomes

inTouch's position paper can be read [here](#).

About inTouch

inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence (inTouch) provides person-centered, integrated and culturally responsive family violence services to migrant and refugee communities across Victoria.

We have assisted over 20,000 women and children experiencing family violence throughout our 36 years of operation, providing a holistic service that centers the experiences of victim-survivors in everything we do.

inTouch provides many services including court and community outreach, legal assistance, sector training and capacity building, prevention work and perpetrator intervention programs. For more information, visit www.intouch.org.au

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