

Financial Abuse

What is financial abuse?

Financial abuse is a type of family violence. It can take many forms, but the intent behind the behaviour is to limit the other party's ability to access financial resources in order to have power over them.

Financial abuse is also sometimes called economic abuse.

Is it illegal?

In Tasmania, family violence offences are set out in the Family Violence Act 2004. The section of the Act that deals with financial abuse is long, but basically it states that a person cannot control or intimidate, or cause mental harm, apprehension or fear, or make their partner:

- give up control of assets or income,
- dispose of property without consent,
- prevent their partner from participating in household spending decisions,
- prevent a partner from accessing joint financial assets to meet household expenses,
- withhold financial support for the partner and any children.

If a person is found to be financially abusing their partner there can be penalties including having to go to jail.

What can financial abuse look like?

- You and your partner both work but all of the wages go into your partner's bank account. Your partner gives you a small amount each week to pay for the household expenses – this amount is enough to buy basic groceries, but not enough to put much fuel in the car, or buy clothes for the kids.
- You and your partner agreed that you would stay at home with your children when they were young. Now that they've all started school, you are eager to get back into paid employment but your partner had said you cannot go back to work.

- You have a credit card but your partner goes through all your spending and lectures you about what you buy. You try to limit your spending so that they don't get mad.
- You received an inheritance from your parents and when you see that it has come out of your joint account, your partner says that they had to take it because you are not used to handling such large sums of money. Your partner tells you they have invested the money, but will not tell you where. They say that you are stupid to suggest that the money be used as a deposit on a house.
- Your partner owned a house when you met, and now they want to refinance the house to buy a better car. Your partner insists that you jointly sign the paperwork for the new mortgage. When you ask if your name will go on the house title too, they tell you it is their house, and that you are lucky to live there – they could change the locks and kick you out if they wanted to.

Contacts

- **In an emergency situation or if you are in immediate danger, call 000.**
- Family Violence Counselling and Support Service, phone 1800 608 122.
- Engender Equality, phone 03 6278 9090.
- Call Women's Legal Service Tasmania telephone advice line for free and confidential assistance, on **1800 682 468**.

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