



## Women's Legal Services Australia

**MEDIA RELEASE – Friday 8 December, 2017**

### **Women's Legal Services Australia welcomes Parliamentary Family Law Inquiry report**

The report into the Parliamentary Inquiry into a better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence was tabled in Federal Parliament last night. Many of the recommendations are consistent with Women's Legal Services Australia 5 step plan for safety first in family law.

The Committee recommends the removal of the presumption of equal shared parental responsibility in the *Family Law Act*. "For too long the presumption of equal shared parental responsibility has exposed women and children to unsafe arrangements. The presumption is not meant to apply in cases of violence and abuse, however this does not always work in practice. It is often difficult to 'prove' violence to the satisfaction of the court because it occurs behind closed doors, many victims can be unrepresented in court because of limited legal aid and many matters are settled in mediation, often without legal assistance," says WLSA Representative and CEO of Women's Legal Service Queensland, Angela Lynch.

The Committee also recommends establishing stronger processes for early identification and response to family violence; introduction of legislation to ban direct cross-examination of victims-survivors by their abusers; the abolishing of private family consultants; legislative amendments to expressly ensure consideration of family violence in property matters; better supports for families; improvements in training for family law professionals; and additional resourcing of the federal family courts.

"Women's Legal Services Australia has been advocating for many years to put the safety of women and children first in family law. Implementation of these recommendations will help to do just that," says Ms Lynch.

(ENDS)

#### **Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA)**

Women's Legal Services Australia is a national network of community legal centres specialising in women's legal issues. The National Network was established to be actively involved in law reform activities to ensure that, particularly women and children, are not disadvantaged by laws and to lobby for improved access to justice.

Members include: Women's Legal Service Victoria, Women's Legal Service QLD, Women's Legal Service NSW, Women's Legal Service SA, Women's Legal Centre ACT, Women's Legal Service Tasmania, Women's Law Centre of WA, Regional Alliance West Inc, Shoalcoast Community Legal Centre, Central Australia Women's Legal Services, North Queensland Women's Legal Service, and associate members National Family Violence Prevention & Legal Service and Western NSW Community Legal Centre.

#### **For more information**

[Parliamentary Inquiry into a better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence report](#)

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