



### **MEDIA RELEASE - ELECTION 2016**

#### **WLSA LAUNCHES 5 STEP PLAN TO KEEP WOMEN AND CHILDREN SAFE IN FAMILY LAW**

A national alliance of over 90 organizations have called on the leaders of all major political parties to back a new five step plan to put safety first in the family law system this federal election.

“Every day, women and children who have fled violent and abusive homes, are being placed in danger and further traumatised through our family law system” said Pasanna Mutha, national law reform coordinator of Women’s Legal Services Australia.

“Women who have been raped and assaulted are being directly cross-examined by their abusive ex-partners in family courts. The most vulnerable children are being placed in the hands of abusive parents as the family law system struggles to identify and respond to the risk factors in domestic violence cases.”

“Our family law system shouldn’t increase trauma and risk for women and children” said Ms Mutha. “That’s what’s happening now. It’s time that all political parties showed some leadership in making sure the family law system keeps women and children safe.”

Over 90 organisations have signed a joint letter calling on the leaders of the three main political parties to commit to real solutions in addressing the family law crisis. The solutions for a safer family law system are outlined in WLSA’s five step plan – ‘Safety First in Family Law’. The policy platform calls on the major political parties to:

- Place domestic violence experts in family court registries to undertake risk assessments.
- Introduce legislative protections to stop a victim being directly cross-examined by their abuser.
- Roll out a mediation model with specialist domestic violence lawyers and social workers.
- Address the barriers in the family law system for women in high risk groups such as women with disabilities, women from regional and rural communities and women in prison.
- Establish a national accreditation and monitoring scheme for family consultants with mandatory training on domestic violence and working with victims of trauma.
- Increase Commonwealth funding to the legal assistance sector, in accordance with the Productivity Commission’s 2014 recommendations in its report – Access to Justice Arrangements.

“We are not asking for another inquiry or another review. We are asking all major political parties to commit to real action that will make a difference in saving the lives of women and children today.”

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**Visit our campaign website: <https://safetyinfamilylaw.org.au/the-solutions/>**