



MEDIA RELEASE

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Rosie Batty urges Government to adopt new reform plan for family law system to keep women and children safe

Family violence campaigner Rosie Batty has joined forces with women's legal services across Australia to call on the Federal Government to reform the family law system to keep women and children safe.

The former Australian of the year has endorsed a new five-step plan for reform, Safety First in Family Law, launched today by Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA).

The Safety First plan, which includes five recommendations for reforming the family law system, can be implemented right now, and is based on research, evidence and key recommendations from previous family law inquiries.

Ms Batty, who was driven to campaign to end family violence after her 11-year-old son was murdered, said it was critical for the government to act now to reform the family law system.

"Nearly 70 percent of matters lodged in the family courts involve allegations of family violence, but the system is not set up to deal with this – and neither are the many professionals who work within the system," Ms Batty said.

"The family courts don't have case management processes specifically designed for family violence cases, so safety risks are not being managed. This is putting women and children at grave risk."

WLSA spokesperson Helen Matthews said the government needed to show its commitment to ending violence against women. One step to achieving this is by implementing the reform plan developed by specialist women's legal services around Australia.

"Women's legal services across Australia work on the frontline to represent family violence victim survivors – we know just how urgent these reforms are, and how the current family law system is failing women and children," Ms Matthews said.

"These reforms can and should be implemented now. If the Government is serious about making the family law system safe for women and children, it must act and implement our recommendations".

Safety First: Five changes that need to happen NOW to make the family law system safer

- Strengthen family violence response in the family law system
- Provide effective legal help for the most disadvantaged
- Ensure family law professionals have real understanding of family violence
- Increase access to safe dispute resolution models
- Overcome the gaps between the family law, family violence and child protection systems

Join the conversation on Twitter via #safetyfirstinfamilylaw

ENDS

The full Safety First plan to keep women and children safe is available on request.

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