



Women's Legal Services Australia

MEDIA RELEASE

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Over 90 individuals and organisations call for Safety First in Family Law

On the eve of the first Public Hearing of the Joint Select Committee on Australia's Family Law System, over 90 individuals and organisations call for the Federal Government to reform the family law system to keep children and women safe.

A new five-step plan for reform, [Safety First in Family Law](#), was recently launched by family violence campaigner Rosie Batty and Women's Legal Services across the country.

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.

The Safety First Plan is endorsed by sexual and domestic violence services and peaks, health services and peaks, disability organisations, refugee and migrant support services, community organisations, specialist family law and child protection legal assistance providers and legal academics.

"The majority 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," says Ms Helen Matthews, Women's Legal Services Australia spokesperson.

The Safety First Plan recommends strengthening the family violence response in the family law system and ensuring all professionals working within the family law system are family violence and trauma informed.

"We commend the Government in already taking action on Step 1 of the Safety First Plan by announcing the piloting of a risk-screening process and a specialist family violence list in three registries - Adelaide, Brisbane and Parramatta for 2 years from July 2020," says Ms Angela Lynch AM, Women's Legal Services Australia spokesperson. "It is also important that families in regional, rural and remote areas are also similarly supported," says Ms Lynch.

"The many working on the frontline with family violence victims-survivors who have endorsed the Safety First Plan know just how urgent these reforms are, and how the current family law system is failing women and children," Ms Matthews says.



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“We call on the Government to fully implement the Safety First Plan,” says Ms Matthews.

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](#)

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About WLSA

Women’s Legal Services Australia is a national network of community legal centres specialising in women’s legal issues. We are part of Community Legal Centres Australia.

WLSA’s Safety First in Family Law Plan is available [here](#).

The list of endorsements of the Safety First Plan is available [here](#).

Further information on the Safety First Plan is available [here](#).

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