

Safety First

in family law

A five step plan to keep women and children safe in the family law system.

Women's legal services across Australia work on the frontline to represent family violence victim survivors in all state and territory justice systems. Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA) is calling on the Australian Government to implement urgent reforms now, to strengthen family violence specialisation in the family law system. **It's time now for real solutions.**

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

WLSA has developed a five step plan for reform. The plan is supported by research, evidence and key recommendations from past inquiries and reviews into family law, including the recent ALRC review.

WHAT CAN BE DONE NOW TO MAKE THE FAMILY LAW SYSTEM SAFER

- Step 1** > Strengthen family violence response in the family law system
- Step 2** > Provide effective legal help for the most disadvantaged
- Step 3** > Ensure family law professionals have real understanding of family violence
- Step 4** > Increase access to safe dispute resolution models
- Step 5** > Overcome the gaps between the family law, family violence and child protection systems

WHY IS CHANGE NEEDED NOW?

- Family courts do not have case management processes specifically designed for family violence cases (other than for some child abuse cases). Safety risks are therefore not being managed.
- By formally identifying family violence early, decisions can be made to protect women and children from further family violence.
- There is limited understanding of family violence, trauma, cultural issues and disability amongst many professionals working in the system. This can lead to poor management of risks to the safety of women and children. These professionals include family consultants (expert witnesses), lawyers and judges.



Women's Legal
Services Australia

WHERE CAN I ACCESS A FULL COPY OF
WLSA'S SAFETY FIRST IN FAMILY LAW PLAN?

www.wlsa.org.au