

MEDIA RELEASE:

Government's commitment to eliminating violence against women yet to be proved

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Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA), a national network of women's legal services advocating for women's access to justice, has expressed its disappointment with the Commonwealth Government's official response to the 2010 report *Family Violence - A National Response*. "After waiting two and a half years, we had hoped for some clear commitments by the Government to address family violence including adequate funding and appropriate timelines," said Rhonda Payget, Convenor of Women's Legal Services Australia.

The 2010 report made 186 recommendations to improve specific family violence laws and legal frameworks to promote the safety of women and their children. Of the 186 recommendations, 56 were identified as appropriate for the Commonwealth to respond to separately, independent to the responses of States and Territories.

"The Government response to these 56 recommendations is disappointingly inadequate. More than half of the recommendations have merely been "noted" and the Government appears to be handballing many of the recommendations to the states and territories for consideration."

"One of our greatest concerns is that much needed reforms in the area of family violence will not be addressed if it is unclear who is responsible and accountable for them" said Ms Payget.

The response also relies heavily on initiatives the Government has already introduced, rather than acknowledging the gaps that still exist in the system that prevent women and children being safe from violence.

"While we acknowledge the importance of the range of initiatives the Government has already taken, these are only the first steps towards an integrated, nation-wide response to preventing family violence."

"The Government has an opportunity to demonstrate its real commitment to addressing violence against women in Australia by implementing the recommendations of this report and the proposed initiatives in its own National Plan to Address Violence Against Women and their Children."

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