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Women's Legal Services Australia welcomes long overdue reforms to make our family law system safer for victim-survivors and their children.

Ensuring our family law system prioritises safety and recovery from family, sexual and domestic violence will promote the long-term wellbeing of thousands of victim-survivors and their children.

"Every day across Australia, Women's Legal Services work with women and children experiencing family, sexual and domestic violence and abuse, facing homelessness, left without savings, or struggling to stabilise their lives after trauma, and so often they are undermined by the family law system," Women's Legal Services Australia's Nadia Bromley says.

"For many years we along with more than 100 women's organisations, legal experts and victim-survivors have called for [Safety First in Family Law](#), and a Federal Government has finally recognised the urgent need to act. We must make this a reality right now.

"We will review the Government's proposal in detail to make sure it guarantees the family law system provides women and children with safer outcomes.

"Time and again we have seen violent men exert ongoing power and control over women by using the shared parenting provisions (which were introduced to the Family Law Act in 2006). Many of the women that we assist have been pressured into agreeing to abusive men having equal time with their child, despite being exposed to violence and abuse – a result that puts children at risk.

"Removing the presumption of 'equal shared parental responsibility' will stop perpetrators using the family law system and parenting arrangements to prolong conflict and coercive control behaviour over shared decision-making. Importantly, this reform will focus decision-making about parenting arrangements on what is in the best interests of children.

"This is how we make the community a safe place for women and their children, and we will continue to push for solutions like this to become a reality.

"We are also pleased to see long overdue reforms that aim to improve outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and to improve the standard of family report writers."

Women's Legal Service Australia's principles to guide any reforms to the family law system are as follows:

1. Ensuring safety for women and children by putting safety and risk at the centre of all practice and decision-making.
2. Promoting accessibility and engagement, including addressing issues of cost, delay, availability of legal assistance, cultural competency and accessibility for people with a disability.

3. Fairness and recognition of diversity, including acknowledging and responding to structural inequalities and bias in the family law system.

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About Women's Legal Services Australia

Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA) is a national network of 13 specialist women's legal services in each State and Territory across Australia, specifically developed to improve women's lives through specialist legal representation, support, and advocacy. We provide trauma-informed, integrated, and wraparound legal services to women that meet a range of their legal and other support needs to improve women's safety and recovery from violence.