



New analysis shows more than 52,000 women to be turned away from Women's Legal Services across Australia due to Federal funding crisis.

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Today, Women's Legal Services Australia published its [2024 Federal Budget Submission](#) seeking ongoing funding from the Federal Government in a genuine and tangible commitment to combat gender inequality across Australia.

Women's Legal Services are seeking a minimum of \$10 million additional dollars per year to ensure financially disadvantaged and marginalised women at risk of violence can receive specialised legal assistance. This figure is not unfounded – the Australia Institute conducted an economic analysis in 2020 confirming at least \$25 million is needed per year to meet the demand for Women's Legal Services in Australia.

Women's Legal Services Australia Chair Elena Rosenman noted across most jurisdictions, and despite funding commitments in previous budget cycles, there has not been a significant uplift in specialist legal services available to Australian women.

“The time for funding is now if the government is serious about standing behind Australian women and ensuring they can access the support they need to be safe, to be engaged in their recovery and actively participate in the legal system.”

“Women's Legal Services are focused on achieving justice, safety and equality for women, yet our capacity to make long-lasting and significant improvements for women has been restricted by chronic underfunding.”

An analysis conducted by Women's Legal Service Australia considered 2023 data collected by all thirteen Women's Legal Services. The data showed over a five-day period, Women's Legal Services were forced to turn away 1,018 women who attempted to seek help. This equates to more than 52,000 Australian women missing out on vital legal assistance each year.

“With the 2024/25 budget, there is an opportunity to break this devastating cycle of unmet demand for women in crisis. Just last week the Federal Government announced an Australian Law Reform Commission inquiry into justice responses to sexual violence and launched a new Consent Policy Framework to guide healthy sexual relationships and consent among young people,” said Ms Rosenman.

“These steps are integral to moving Australia towards a culture where women are safe and respected, but this is not backed by sufficient investment in frontline services. With gender inequality clearly on the government's radar, we must see investment in the safety and future of Australia's women by sustainably funding Women's Legal Services to support and champion their experiences and needs.”

Note: Interviews and comments are available from Chair, Elena Rosenman and CEO of Top End Women's Legal Service, Caitlin Weatherby-Fell.

Media contact: Eleanor Pallett - 0425 852 473 / eleanor@socialchangeprojects.com.au