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MEDIA RELEASE

ALP cross-examination announcement welcome, Turnbull government must now prioritise safety in family law - WLSA

Women's Legal Services Australia has welcomed a commitment from the federal Labor opposition to prevent domestic violence victims being cross-examined in court by their abusers in the family law system.

"Women's Legal Services welcome this announcement as a big step towards protecting victims and their children in the family law system," said Agata Wierzbowski, national coordinator of Women's Legal Services Australia.

"Protecting victims from direct cross-examination by their abusers will not only reduce trauma for those women but also improve justice outcomes for everyone involved.

"The Turnbull government now needs to act. Everyone knows there is no excuse for this practise and it's urgent: dangerous decisions are being made right now.

"With the Labor opposition and the Greens supportive of reform, action can be taken quickly if the Prime Minister and his Attorney General prioritise this.

"Allowing evidence to be delivered without fear or intimidation will improve the information available to courts and prevent dangerous decisions being made.

"While this announcement is a fantastic step in the right direction, Women's Legal Services Australia is still concerned that direct cross examination will still be possible if court officers are given the final say. An outright ban such as that which exists in the Victorian domestic violence legislation is preferable and possible.

"There are still many problems with the family law system that put women and children in danger. We are calling on the entire parliament to progress the reforms identified in the 5-step plan to put safety first in family law."

In May 2016, a national alliance of over 90 organizations called on the leaders of all major political parties to back the five step plan to put safety first in the family law system. Read more [here](#).

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