



Media Release

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An end to direct questioning by abusive partners in family law proceedings

Women's Legal Services Australia welcomes the Government's announcement it will be introducing legislation to amend the *Family Law Act 1975* to prohibit the direct cross-examination of victims of violence in family law proceedings.

"Being directly questioned in court by an abusive ex-partner is not only traumatising it also affects the victim's ability to give evidence. This can prevent important information being made available to the court to protect children from violence in family law proceedings," says Angela Lynch, Women's Legal Services Australia.

"Ending the cross-examination by violent ex-partners is a practical and important step that the government is taking to empower victims to give evidence without fear," says Ms Lynch.

"We also welcome legislative protection so that a victim of violence is not required to cross-examine their alleged perpetrator," says Ms Lynch. "We look forward to further detail about the implementation of these critically important amendments. Proper funding to implement these amendments will be essential to success. We look forward to working with the government on the implementation of this necessary reform", says Ms Lynch.

"Family violence cannot be taken seriously without taking family law seriously. We welcome greater investment in community legal centres, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services and the court system. Additional funding for appropriately skilled family consultants in family law matters and for additional domestic units is important. We look forward to hearing more detail in relation to these announcements." says Kath Taplin, Women's Legal Services Australia.

"It is important that all professionals working in the family law system are domestic violence and trauma informed. This requires ongoing training on domestic violence, cultural competency and working with victims of trauma. There is also a need to establish a national accreditation and monitoring scheme for all practitioners who prepare family reports with mandatory training on domestic violence, cultural competency and working with victims of trauma", says Ms Taplin.

WLSA is interested in learning more details about the proposed review of the *Family Law Act 1975* and urges genuine consultation with the sector, in particular those organisations working on the front line with survivors of family violence, from the outset. The voices of women and children affected by violence must be strongly represented in the review process.

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Women's Legal Services Australia is a national network of community legal centres specialising in women's legal issues.

Further information - WLSA's [Five step plan to put safety first in family law](#).