



## Women's Legal Services Australia

**MEDIA RELEASE – 10 September 2018**

### **WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICES AUSTRALIA (WLSA) URGES THE GOVERNMENT TO EXTEND REPORTING PERIOD BEFORE DISMANTLING FAMILY COURT**

Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA) is deeply concerned that the Coalition Government is rushing the recent Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia Bill and the accompanying consequential amendments bill through parliament without proper consideration about the impact of those changes to the safety of family violence victim-survivors and their children.

Together with the Law Council and other key stakeholders, WLSA calls for the government's reporting period to be extended to allow for changes to the family court structure to be informed by the Australian Law Reform Commission's Family Law Review and following proper consultation with the community.

WLSA fears the changes which will dismantle the Family Law Court and adopt a generalist court structure will result in a diminution of expertise in the family law system and may increase risk of harm for family violence victim-survivors and their children.

WLSA is further concerned that the changes don't address the underlying problem of chronic underfunding that has long plagued the family law system.

Angela Lynch, CEO of Women's Legal Service QLD and WLSA spokesperson, said "We are concerned these changes are being rushed through parliament without proper consultation with family violence experts and victim-survivors in order to understand exactly what the changes will mean for the safety of families experiencing family violence. Providing only a number of weeks for stakeholders to review the most significant overhaul of the family law system in 40 years is grossly insufficient and dangerous."

"The ALRC Review commissioned by the government provides a unique opportunity for the family law system to be re-designed in consultation with the community and key stakeholders, including victim-survivors of family violence. We fear that rushing the changes through before hearing the outcomes of this Review will result in a piecemeal approach that does not take the needs of family violence victim-survivors and their families into account."

#### **About WLSA**

WLSA is a national network of community legal centres specialising in women's legal issues. We are part of the National Association of Community Legal Centres (NACLC).



## Women's Legal Services Australia

The National Network was established to be actively involved in law reform activities to ensure that, particularly women and children, are not disadvantaged by laws and to lobby for improved access to justice.

The individual Member Centres regularly provide advice, information, casework and legal education to women on particularly family law and family violence matters but can also provide advice on more general legal issues.

More information about WLSA can be found here: [http://www.wlsa.org.au/about\\_us](http://www.wlsa.org.au/about_us)

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