



### MEDIA RELEASE – 5 December 2018

#### **WOMEN'S LEGAL SERVICE AUSTRALIA WELCOMES ANNOUNCEMENT OF FUNDING FOR NEW FAMILY VIOLENCE AND CROSS-EXAMINATION SCHEME**

Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA) welcomes the recent announcement by the Morrison Government for \$7 million of new ongoing funding for legal aid commissions to fund the new Family Violence and Cross Examination of Parties scheme.

It is anticipated the scheme will outline how the proposed legislative changes in the [Family Law Amendment \(Family Violence and Cross-examination of Parties\) Bill 2018](#) will work in practice. The Bill aims to ban family violence perpetrators from being able to directly cross-examine their victim-survivors in the family courts. This would bring the family court more in line with protections already available to family violence victim-survivors in most state based courts.

We welcome the Senate's passing of The Bill today.

Cross-examination is the legal process by which evidence put before the Court can be tested. It is essential that evidence to be relied on by the family courts in decisions where there is family violence can be tested but in a way which is safe for all family members concerned. These reforms are an important step towards making the family law system more trauma informed and bringing it into line with measures already available to protect women who have experienced violence in the family violence jurisdictions in some states.

Separate and ongoing funding stream was (and remains) critical to the scheme's success.

Angela Lynch, CEO of Women's Legal Service Queensland and Spokesperson for WLSA said:

"The ban on cross-examination is one of the key priority areas WLSA has campaigned for as part of its Safety First in Family Law Campaign".

"The success of the bill was always going to be dependent on adequate funding for legal services, to ensure that both the victim and the perpetrator can have a legal representative to act on their behalf, and the ability of the courts to identify and respond in a trauma informed way to family violence in any given case."

"The news of the Bill's passage through the Senate, the establishment of the Scheme and the announcement of separate and ongoing funding is strongly welcomed and is an important step forward in increasing safety for women in the family court system".



## Women's Legal Services Australia

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### **About WLSA**

Women's Legal Services Australia 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).

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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