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## Every Australian will pay the price for any cuts to women's safety services

*Australia's peak body for Women's Legal Services warns the 2026-27 Federal Budget must maintain investment despite global pressures*

Women's Legal Services Australia (WLSA) has called on the Federal Government to ensure that funding for women and gender diverse people fleeing violence is protected in the 2026-27 Budget.

**Executive Director, Adrienne Walters** said WLSA member services appreciate the impact of global events on Australia's economy and demands for financial support.

*"In a time of genuine financial strain for families and for governments, investment in early legal intervention and programs focused on women's safety are not luxuries. They are a responsible choice that prevents far greater downstream costs."*

*"Specialist legal and support services for women facing violence are not only a safety net, they are also a critical prevention tool."*

*With rising inflation and fuel costs, the risks of violence against women in their homes grows. At the same time, the costs of delivering services, especially vital outreach services, are also growing. The Government should be increasing its investment, to ensure no woman is left behind."*

Demand for women's legal services continues to grow, driven by intersecting social, economic, environmental and technological pressures that are increasing both the volume and the complexity of legal need.

In 2023, WLSA found that around 1000 people a week were turned away from support services nationwide, reflected **WLSA Chair Elena Rosenman**.

*"Every woman turned away from a Women's Legal Service is a woman left more exposed to violence, more likely to face long-term economic hardship, and less able to exercise her basic rights."*

Rates of gendered violence in Australia remain persistently high, and despite efforts, too many laws and systems are perpetuating gender inequality and enabling abuse against women by perpetrators of violence.

In fact, up to 90% of women seeking support have experienced financial abuse, which is a stark reminder that economic security and freedom from violence are deeply intertwined.

*“Access to specialist, trauma-informed legal assistance, social support, and financial counselling offered by Women’s Legal Services can break cycles of abuse before they deepen, keeping women and children out of crisis systems and building the foundations for financial security.”*

In January, WLSA made a submission to the 2026-27 Federal Budget, highlighting that while welcome, the additional funding for Women’s Legal Services delivered by the National Access to Justice Partnership (NAJP) is not sufficient to keep up with inflation.

This means there is not enough funding to meet the growing demand for services or address pay inequity in the legal sector. In fact, some services warned they may need to reduce staff over the life of the NAJP. The economic challenges of the past few months have worsened this situation, particularly for services whose staff spend a lot of time on the road delivering crucial outreach services to women outside of major cities.

Read the full budget submission on our website: [www.wlsa.org.au](http://www.wlsa.org.au)

**ENDS**

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### **Women’s Legal Services Australia**

Women’s Legal Services Australia is the national peak body for specialist Women’s Legal Services. We have members in every State and Territory, including two First Nations community-controlled services. Together, our members supported over 34,000 women across urban, regional and remote communities in 2024-25. Some members have been supporting women for more than 40 years.