

Media Release



New leadership needed to end family violence

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The appointment of Malcolm Turnbull as prime minister will be an empty change unless the Federal Government matches its claimed commitment to end family violence with action to fund services and respect their right to advocate.

‘For this change to be meaningful, we need strong leadership ensuring all women facing family violence can get free legal help from a community legal centre,’ said Liana Buchanan, Executive Officer of the Federation of Community Legal Centres, today.

‘The Federal Government’s cuts to community legal centres endanger women and children and contradict its claimed commitment to ending family violence. Prime minister Turnbull can change that.’

Buchanan said community legal centres would play a vital role in the proposed national intervention order scheme by helping women face court and get orders with appropriate conditions to keep them and their children safe.

Centres also offer free help with a range of legal problems surrounding family violence, including family law, homelessness and financial crises.

Due to cuts, in 2017 community legal centres nationally will get less than Federal MPs spent on office refits in 2014/15. The 30 per cent national cuts will reduce community legal centre funding to less than five per cent of what the Federal Government spends on its own lawyers every year.

‘The Federal Government has a significant role in deciding the funding available to keep women and children safe. It decides who gets help, and who is left at risk with nowhere to turn. Prime minister Turnbull must recognise this and lead. We agree with him that we need advocacy, not slogans,’ said Michael Smith, Chairperson of the National Association of Community Legal Centres, today.

‘We look forward to hearing the prime minister’s plan to turn commitment to action. That action must also include the reinstatement of the national Family Violence Prevention Legal Services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities as a distinct program with separate funding. These communities experience tragically high levels of family violence,’ Mr Smith concluded.

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