

Media Release



MYEFO fails women who need free legal help with family violence

Tuesday 15 December 2015 – for immediate release

The Federal Government's failure to restore cut funding to the free legal help women desperately need to secure intervention orders through the courts and to face the complex legal issues that flow from violence against women will put them at greater risk, according to the Federation of Community Legal Centres Victoria.

'September's Women's Safety Package failed to make up the massive shortfall from broader Federal cuts to community legal centres, and now MYEFO has failed again as the Federal Government states it is committed to family violence action and a national intervention order scheme,' said Liana Buchanan, Executive Officer of the Federation of Community Legal Centres today.

'Today's MYEFO announcement shows the Federal Government has made a deliberate choice to retain very modest savings in terms of the overall Budget that have a massive impact on the lives of women and children.'

Ms Buchanan said MYEFO had left in place national cuts of nearly 30 per cent set to commence in 2017.

'The need for free legal help far exceeds the three of fifty Victorian community legal centres that received some funding through September's Women's Safety Package, and that's a situation that holds across Australia.

'Community legal centres receive less money in a year than Federal MPs get in entitlements in six months, and a tiny fraction of the \$700 million per year the Federal Government spends on its own lawyers. In 2017, community legal centres nationally will receive just \$30.1m and a third of the \$15 million over three years announced for legal assistance in the Women's Safety Package. This will leave many women at risk without legal help.

'This announcement retains savings at the expense of women and children who are victims of family violence, and the Federal Government has chosen to undermine the legal help that stands between those victims and perpetrators,' Buchanan concluded.

Multiple community legal centres are available for comment on the impact of MYEFO on the legal assistance they provide, and what it will mean for the disadvantaged clients they help every day.

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