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MEDIA RELEASE

Rosie Batty distressed by funding cut to Women's Legal Service Victoria

Victoria's only specialist women's family violence legal service has been devastated by a funding cut despite soaring family violence figures in the state. [Victoria Police](#) reports family incidents have increased by over 93% over the past five years, with services across the state stretching to assist the increasing numbers. The funding cut to Women's Legal Service Victoria (WLSV) from the Federal Government will force the statewide service to cut already overwhelmed family violence services for women across Victoria, affecting approximately 600 women desperately seeking assistance.

WLSV provides more than 3,400 women across Victoria with free specialised family violence and family law legal services every year. The not for profit organisation runs duty lawyer services for women at the family violence and family law courts, skypes legal assistance to women in domestic violence refuges and family violence services across Victoria and operates a state-wide legal advice line. The organisation faces a funding cut of \$200,000 effective 01 July 2017.

Rosie Batty, Former Australian of the Year, was shocked to hear of the cut to the organisation she works with.

"We have made strides as a community in how we deal with family violence but this feels like a step backwards. If women are able to take the brave step to leave a violent partner, they must be supported with specialist assistance, including legal assistance. To see funding cut to an organisation that has spent the past 35 years assisting women and children across Victoria with family violence services is extremely distressing," said Ms Batty.

Joanna Fletcher, CEO of WLSV explains that the funding cuts will require the state-wide service to cut a number of integral programs they run across the state.

"This cut will have a devastating impact on women who access WLSV to help them make decisions about protecting themselves and their children from an abusive partner. Let's not mince words here, these can be life and death decisions, with more than one woman every week being killed by a current or former partner."

"Every year our free legal advice line helps almost 900 women with free legal advice. It looks like that service may no longer be feasible. Our duty lawyer services, which help women at the courts, are also at risk." said Ms Fletcher.

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