

Reforms to Family Law May Support Violence Against Women

Media Release

The proposed changes to Australia's Family Law System gives tacit approval to men's use of violence and abuse towards family members, Mr Danny Blay, Manager of No To Violence (NTV), the Male Family Violence Prevention Association, said today.

"There is no indication in the Prime Minister's statement that the issue of family violence will be taken into account when directing separating couples to mediation," Mr Blay said.

"We know that around one in four women experience violence in their current relationship, yet research indicates that family violence is under reported by around 80%," Mr Blay said. "It is understood that many women do not articulate experiences of violence from their partner for fear of retribution, guilt, shame or confusion."

"This new Family Relationship Centres program will in effect be forcing women to face a man who has possibly used violence towards her, and potentially their children," Mr Blay said. "Women may be coerced into agreeing to particular child access and parenting arrangements out of fear."

"Through the 'Violence Against Women: Australia Says No' campaign, the federal government has indicated that it only considers physical and sexual violence to be of concern. While other forms of controlling behaviour are just as damaging, we can't be sure that the changes to our Family Law System will take into account the range of types of violence and abuse."

"Australia's existing family law provides for equity and justice, taking into account the needs of all parties. The law is not biased against men, yet nobody should be able to claim an inherent right to have access to their children if they are not fit to do so."

"No To Violence calls on the federal government to instead fund the Family Court to do their job properly and effectively by providing adequate legal and community support to ensure equitable and just responses to all concerned."

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