



Women's Legal Service

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DV HELPLINE JANUARY SPIKE

Across January Women's Legal Service Queensland (WLSQ) received an alarming 41% spike in calls to their State-wide Domestic Violence Helpline.

The community legal centre which each year provides free legal and welfare assistance to over 11,000 Queensland women experiencing domestic violence each year, and with them over 17,000 children, continues to experience increasing demand.

This echoes police statistics, with Queensland Police responding to on average 238 domestic and family violence (DFV) matters each day across the 2015-2016 financial year, with a 38% increase in DFV Protection Order breaches.¹

With sister organisation, Women's Legal Service North Queensland, WLSQ provides almost a third of total domestic violence casework and advices of all 34 Queensland Community Legal Centres.

Coordinator, Angela Lynch believes it is one the busiest periods in the Service's 33 year history, with matters becoming increasingly complex.

"We're seeing a lot of clients whose situations have become untenable over Christmas. Lots of clients whose children have not been returned after holidays with the other parent".

While contending with increased demand, WLSQ are also bracing for the impact of 30% Federal Government funding cuts to community legal centres, scheduled to take effect by mid-year.

"Demand already exceeds our capacity. The cuts would be catastrophic for the helpline and it would require a complete restructure. This year to date, we have only been able to answer 50% of incoming calls", Ms Lynch said.

"If we receive the Federal Government funding cuts, 1366 less women every year will get the help they need. That's about 5 fewer women per day receiving legal advice to escape DV. These are women in extremely dangerous situations, with no other options. A frontline legal response is essential to safety. Women could die because of these cuts" Ms Lynch said.

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¹ Queensland Police Annual Statistical Review 2015/2016, https://www.police.qld.gov.au/corporatedocs/reportsPublications/statisticalReview/Documents/2015-16/AnnualStatisticalReview_2015-16.pdf