

**MEDIA RELEASE**  
**TUESDAY 20<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER**

**WOMEN'S ECONOMIC SECURITY STATEMENT SECURES LIFE CHANGING REFORMS FOR VICTIMS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE**

The *Women's Economic Security Statement* will offer two life-changing reforms for family violence victims said Women's Legal Service Victoria today.

Many women escaping family violence are living with limited assets and serious debt, yet are walking away from securing fair financial outcomes because our court system is too costly and complex. Under these new reforms, women will be able to:

- Easily access their former partner's superannuation information via a mechanism allowing the ATO to administer information provided directly to the courts;<sup>1</sup>
- Access a simplified and streamlined small claims property process.<sup>2</sup>

Women's Legal Service Victoria have been advocating directly to the Minister For Women the Honorable Kelly O'Dwyer MP for these reforms, following the release of their *Small Claims, Large Battles* report released in March this year.

"These simple reforms are life changing for women fighting for fair financial outcomes in our family law system", said Helen Matthews, Legal and Policy Director at Women's Legal Service Victoria.

"These small claims proposals will assist to reduce costs and delays in the courts. They are a huge win for everyone in the family law system.

"A streamlined small claims property process will provide much needed relief for vulnerable women trying to navigate our costly and complicated legal system. It will result in reduced delays and more efficient dispute resolution.

"Making access to superannuation information easily available will mean a lesser burden on family violence survivors and less court time be wasted trying to enforce disclosure requirements. It's a win for everyone in the family law system.

"Many women escaping family violence are living with limited assets and serious debt. For them, superannuation is often the only part of the property pool.

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<sup>1</sup> **RECOMMENDATION 5: Small Claims, Large Battles report**

The Australian Government provide an administrative mechanism for the release of information about the identity of a former partner's superannuation fund and it's value

<sup>2</sup> **RECOMMENDATION 1: Small Claims, Large Battles report**

The Australian Government, in consultation with the Federal Circuit Court and Family Court of Australia, promote early resolution of small property disputes through a streamlined case management process available upon application to the court, with simplified procedural and evidentiary requirements.

“The current mandatory disclosure of superannuation assets mechanism is broken for women who are leaving abusive relationships.

“Nearly 75 per cent of women in our *Small Claims* project experienced continued economic abuse, with perpetrators manipulating the system to extend their trauma. Deliberate refusal to disclose superannuation assets was a large factor in this, but this mechanism will now remove that control.

“We are pleased to see that our Government has listened and picked up on our key proposals. These reforms will be transformative to the lives of women across Australia.

**SMALL CLAIMS, LARGE BATTLES REPORT:** <https://bit.ly/2AZbm0R>

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