



Multicultural Centre  
Against Family Violence

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **inTouch Highlights Urgent Need for Specialised Support Amidst Community Legal Centre Funding Crisis**

The plight of women dealing with family violence has reached a critical juncture, following the release of figures indicating that around [52,000 women a year](#) miss out on access to legal services. This revelation has further underscored the pressing need for increased and specialised funding, particularly for service providers like inTouch Women's Legal Centre, who support migrant and refugee women navigating the complexities of family violence, family law and migration system.

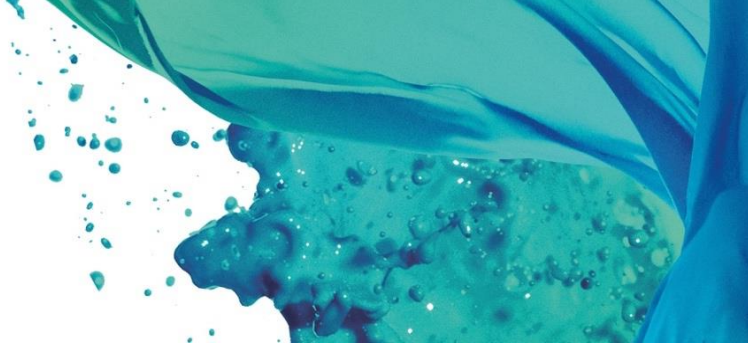
These figures come ahead of the Federal Budget and a review of the [National Legal Assistance Partnership \(NLAP\)](#), a pivotal funding agreement between the Commonwealth and states aimed at bolstering access to essential legal services.

Migrant and refugee women experiencing family violence encounter a myriad of complex challenges, including a lack of understanding of the Australian legal system, language barriers necessitating the engagement of interpreters, a higher rate of homeless and unemployment and visa-related issues. The complexities inherent in these cases require increased resources and can hamper a client's ability to seek and obtain the necessary legal assistance, highlighting the urgent need for funding for tailored support and resources.

"We know that the community legal sector is experiencing considerable shortfalls when it comes to securing appropriate funding," says inTouch Women's Legal Centre's Executive Manager of Legal Services and Principal Lawyer, Ajsela Siskovic. "However, as part of this broader picture, it's essential that we recognise the significant resources required to support some of the sector's most vulnerable clients- migrant and refugee women experiencing family violence."

"When working with our clients, our team invests over three times the typical time and resources needed for an English-speaking client familiar with our judicial system. As our legal centre operates at maximum capacity, we frequently face the difficult decision of turning away clients, which can expose these women to significant safety risks."

Professor Manjula O'Connor, Chair of the Royal Australian New Zealand College of Psychiatrists Family Violence Psychiatry Network, recognises the positive impact of specialised legal services such as inTouch's on migrant and refugee women experiencing family violence.



“Women from non-English speaking countries are at multiple risks of human rights abuses- for example many can face being misidentified as the perpetrator of violence, spousal abandonment, dowry abuse and complex forms of post-separation abuse in family law matters,” Professor O’Connor said. “Additionally, uncertainty of their migration status creates additional opportunities for violence and control. Legal services provided by inTouch and similar centres are essential to protect our most vulnerable women from human rights abuses.”

However, to continue delivering this essential support, inTouch Women’s Legal Centre and similar services require sustainable, measurable funding, acknowledging the unique value community legal centres offer their clients. This funding should reflect both the need and the actual cost of delivering services, particularly for clients with intersectional needs.

“We know that being flexible and innovative with our legal services results in the long-term safety and stability of our clients,” Ms Siskovic said. “If the Government is committed to solving the problem of family violence, it must overhaul the way legal services are funded in this country. Chronic underfunding severely restricts our ability to address the profound impact of family violence, perpetuating cycles of vulnerability and injustice.”

**#####ENDS#####**

### **About inTouch Women’s Legal Centre**

The inTouch Women’s Legal Centre was established in 2012, in recognition of the multiple barriers that many migrant and refugee women experience when trying to access the justice system. We provide legal advice and assistance to clients who are already receiving support through inTouch’s case managers and are the first multidisciplinary practice in Australia to provide this type of inclusive service response.

This end-to-end support model also allows inTouch to provide a comprehensive continuum of service – the client’s file and personal circumstances (including instances of violence) are managed privately and concurrently by practitioners, avoiding recurrences of trauma.

### **Our services include:**

- Protection from family violence – intervention orders
- Family law – dispute resolution including parenting matters
- Small property settlements and financial matters
- Immigration and Visa assistance
- Victims of Crime Assistance Tribunal (VOCAT) applications
- Divorce Clinics