

MEDIA RELEASE

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Advocates welcome Budget investment to address economic abuse and weaponisation of the child support system

A national alliance of women's organisations* welcomes the Federal Government's \$182.6 million investment in strengthening the child support system to ensure women and their children receive the support they are entitled to. The investment is a necessary step forward and signals growing recognition of the need for stronger enforcement, better oversight, and system design to prevent the child support system from being used as a tool of harm by perpetrators of violence.

The alliance is calling for the Government to build on this positive first step and progress further urgent reforms to address ways the current child support settings enable ongoing harm post-separation, including:

- Making Agency Collect the default child support collection method, with stronger oversight of private collection arrangements
- Closing loopholes that allow income minimisation, avoidance behaviour, and delayed payment, including through business structures
- Addressing the harmful link between child support and Family Tax Benefit A, including debts arising from non-payment and delayed tax returns
- Improving trauma-informed practice, workforce training, and clear communications for people navigating the child support system

Continued reform will be essential to ensure the child support system consistently delivers its goals of supporting children's rights, promoting safety and providing long-term financial security for families affected by economic abuse. We look forward to continuing to work with the Government on the upcoming reforms and their implementation.

These reforms follow the long-standing advocacy of countless women, advocates and community groups that have consistently campaigned for fair child support and economic security for single-mother families.

Quotes from Dr Jennie Gray, CEO Women's Legal Service WA

"The Non Payment of Child Support Working Group members were excited to see the significant commitment in the 2026–27 Federal Budget to address the weaponisation of the child support system. As it stands, the child support system reinforces traditional power dynamics, facilitates economic abuse, and fails to address the profound impacts of non-payment on children. We know that there are many loopholes in the system that enable perpetrators to facilitate abuse, including after separation. This is a wicked and complex social problem. The effects on mothers and their children are material and disempowering."

“The identification of these loopholes, and strategies to remedy widespread systemic failure is an important first step, and we congratulate the government on recognising this. We look forward to building on these reforms.”

Quotes from Melanie Hopkinson, CEO, Financial Counsellors’ Association of Western Australia

“This investment represents an important acknowledgment that non-payment of child support is not simply an administrative issue, but a form of economic abuse that can continue long after separation, with real-life consequences for children and parents.”

“Financial Counsellors and frontline services regularly support families who experience ongoing harm when the child support system is weaponised.”

“We welcome these reforms that strengthen the system and better support families to recover from harm and THRIVE long-term.”

Quotes from Jasmine Opdam, Coordinator, Economic Abuse Reference Group

“We welcome this long-overdue investment in closing loopholes in our child support system. Our member organisations support victim survivors who continue to experience economic abuse for years after separation, causing real and long-lasting harm to them and their children.”

“These reforms are a practical and common-sense step towards streamlining the payment of child support, improving real-time information sharing between government agencies, and enforcing consequences for people who exploit the system to avoid paying child support for their children.”

Quotes from Adrienne Walters, Executive Director, Women’s Legal Services Australia

“The child support system should be a place that prevents harm to women and their children. But it is currently facilitating the ongoing coercion and control of women by perpetrators of violence, and through this, harming children.

“Investment in making the child support system safer and tackling the shocking levels of financial abuse is both the right thing to do and a smart economic decision.

“There is much more to be done to ensure that single parent household, most of which are headed by women, have the foundations for economic security, including by separating child support from Family Tax Benefit.”

Quotes from Kate Allingham, CEO, Economic Justice Australia

“Our Member Centres across Australia, community legal centres who specialise in social security issues, constantly deal with cases where child support is at the centre of legal disputes when parents separate. Currently, there are gaps in the law and policy that allow perpetrators of family and domestic violence to weaponise the child support and social security systems against their former partner. These Budget measures constitute important steps towards rectifying that.”

Quotes from Funmi Adesina, Principal Lawyer and FDRP, Redgum Justice WA

Many years of system abuse used as a tool to disadvantage women and children through unpaid child support has persisted across generations and must be addressed now. We welcome the new reforms and anticipate their continuation, as the impacts of unpaid child support will affect future generations if not addressed now.”

* The [Non-Payment of Child Support as a Form of Economic Abuse Working Group](#) (NPCSWG) is a national alliance of women’s legal, financial counselling and economic rights organisations working to lift the national conversation on non-payment of child support as economic abuse, drawing on evidence including Women’s Legal Services Australia’s research paper [‘Non-Payment of Child Support as Economic Abuse of Women and Children: A Literature Review’ \(2024\)](#).

Further information on non-payment of child support as a form of economic abuse is available at <https://earg.org.au/our-publications/the-non-payment-of-child-support-as-a-form-of-economic-abuse/>

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