



National Legal Aid welcomes funding to reform the Child Support Scheme

13 May 2026

National Legal Aid (NLA) welcomes last night's federal budget announcement of \$182.6 million over four years from 2026–27 and \$19.6 million ongoing from 2030–31 to address issues of weaponisation, financial abuse, and non-compliance in the Child Support Scheme.

NLA has long advocated for these reforms to the Child Support Scheme. "These reforms are an important part of keeping families safe in Australia. Individuals have taken advantage of government systems to avoid responsibility and to cause harm to victim-survivors. This weaponisation of the scheme needs to stop. As the main provider of legal assistance for child support nationally, Legal Aids acknowledge the significant positive impact these reforms will have particularly on vulnerable women and children," said NLA Chair, Annmarie Lumsden.

Specialist Legal Aid child support staff across Australia provide legal assistance to victim-survivors experiencing financial abuse.

"Our Child Support Legal Service provides daily assistance to people experiencing what the budget measures aim to address. Our clients tell us the Child Support Scheme is riddled with loopholes that make it impossible to ensure a fair level of financial support for their children.

We see clients every day whose ex-partners hide or minimise their income and assets and even withhold children to avoid paying child support. We lodge applications to review or appeal child support assessments and to chase child support debts in situations of financial abuse.

The Australian Government can stop the weaponisation of child support. These budget measures are an important first step to making child support fairer and easier to access." Child Support Legal Service, Victoria Legal Aid.

"Reducing gender-based violence through the strengthening of government systems, such as the Child Support Scheme, must necessarily include investment in legal assistance. That is why NLA calls on the Albanese Government to ensure that the announcement of \$182.6 million over four years from 2026–27 and \$19.6 million ongoing from 2030–31, includes funding and improved referral pathways to Legal Aids to ensure that carer parents can obtain independent and confidential legal advice about their child support options from our expert child support staff," said NLA Executive Director, Yvette D'Ath.

For media enquiries, please contact NLA Executive Director, Yvette D'Ath at NLA@nationallegalaid.org.au or via **02 6173 5417**

Background – Legal Aid Case Studies (deidentified)

Mia's story

For over a year, our client Mia* (not her real name) has been fighting for the child support payments owed to her three-year-old daughter, who is currently experiencing serious health issues. A victim-survivor of family violence, Mia had to get an intervention order against her daughter's father, 'I even had to move house for my safety, because of the sort of person he had become.'

After the father's reported income decreased from \$100,000 to under \$20,000 per year, Mia thought something was up. She applied to child support for a Change of Assessment, arguing that the father was still working and may be minimising or hiding his income. Child support accepted Mia's application, but the father lodged an objection. This prompted another internal process and ended up with an appeal to the Administrative Review Tribunal.

After months of hearings and conferences, the Tribunal dismissed the father's appeal.

Despite all this, the father has only partially complied with his child support obligations. The original debt remains. Mia is now faced with the stress of further administrative and legal proceedings to claw back the debt or being left without.

Rosa's story

Our client, Rosa* (not her real name) identifies as a First Nations woman, is a victim of financial abuse and has over \$15,000 of child support arrears owing to her.

During her marriage, her husband, John* worked cash in hand jobs alongside his regular employment. John had a poor credit rating, so Rosa was forced to take out credit cards in her name. John racked up significant bills on the credit cards, which Rosa had to pay. She is now struggling to pay rent and day-to-day living costs, as the primary carer of their two children.

Following the parties' divorce, John stopped making child support payments and did not lodge his tax returns. Child support has estimated his income at \$90,000 per year, but Rosa believes he is gaming the system by transferring money into his new wife's name to avoid child support payments.

Rosa's lawyer contacted Child Support, who advised they were not taking any steps to chase John's debt because it appeared he had no money. John's child support debt continues to grow, increasing pressure and financial stress on Rosa and her children. Despite this, John is yet to face any penalty.