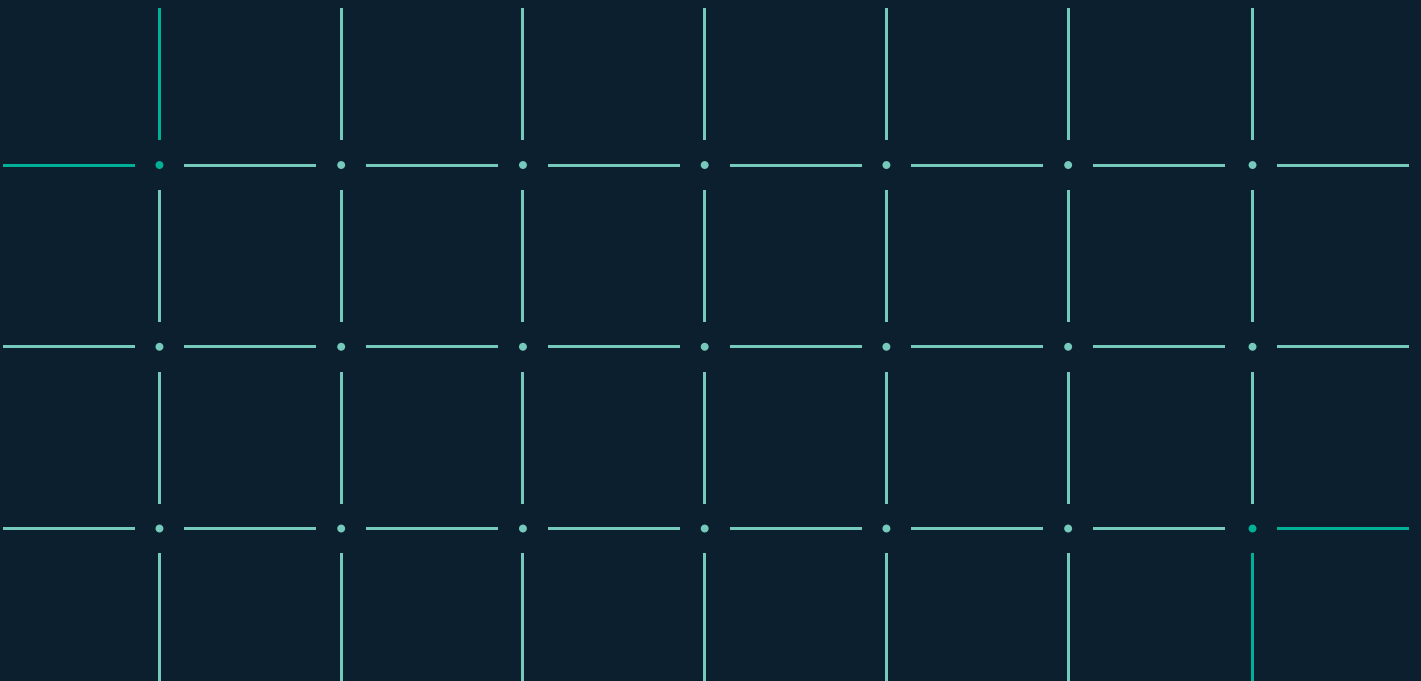Legislative Assembly
Legal and Social Issues Committee

Building the evidence base

Inquiry into capturing data on people who use family violence in Victoria

April 2025

Acknowledgements

Traditional owners

The Committee acknowledges First Nations peoples as the Traditional Owners and custodians of the land in Victoria and pays respects to Elders past and present.

The Committee acknowledges that family violence should be understood in the historical context of settlement and colonisation and the resulting and continuing impacts.

Victims and survivors of family violence

The Committee acknowledges the severe impact of family violence on individuals, families and communities, and the strength and resilience of the children, young people and adults who have experienced, and are still experiencing family violence.

The Committee pays its respects to those who did not survive and their family members and friends.

Legislative Assembly
Legal and Social Issues Committee

Building the evidence base

Inquiry into capturing data on people who use family violence in Victoria

April 2025

Committee membership

CHAIR
Ella George MP
Lara

DEPUTY CHAIR
Annabelle Cleeland MP
Euroa

Chris Couzens MP
Geelong

Chris Crewther MP
Mornington

Cindy McLeish MP
Eildon

Meng Heang Tak MP
Clarinda

Jackson Taylor MP
Bayswater

About the Committee

Functions

The Legal and Social Issues Standing Committee is established under the Legislative Assembly Standing Orders Chapter 24—Committees.

The Committee's functions are to inquire into and report on any proposal, matter or thing connected with—

- the Department of Families Fairness and Housing

- the Department of Health

- the Department of Government Services

- the Department of Justice and Community Safety

- the Department of Premier and Cabinet and related agencies.

Secretariat

Jessica Strout, Committee Manager
Katherine Murtagh, Research Officer (until January 2025)
Caitlin Connally, Research Officer (from March 2025)
Danielle Broadhurst, Administrative and Research Assistant
Fred Toll, Graduate Recruit (from February 2025)

Additional support

Niamh McEvoy, Project Officer
Hugh McLeish, Student, Monash University Clinical Legal Education program
Megan Rocke, Senior Parliamentary Officer

Contact details

Address Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee
Parliament of Victoria
Parliament House, Spring Street
East Melbourne Victoria 3002

Phone +61 3 8682 2843

Email lsic.assembly@parliament.vic.gov.au

Web parliament.vic.gov.au/lsic-la

Contents

Terms of reference

Inquiry into capturing data on people who use family violence in Victoria

On 21 March 2024, the Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee was referred an inquiry into the mechanisms for capturing data on the profile and volume of perpetrators of family violence [people using family violence] in Victoria and barriers to achieving a full understanding of this cohort. The Committee is expected to report its findings no later than 26 November 2024.

The reporting date was extended to 31 March 2025 by resolution of the Legislative Assembly on 1 August 2024.

Chair's foreword

A woman has been assaulted. She goes to hospital—her data is collected. She goes to a domestic violence service—her data is collected. She goes to Centrelink—her data is collected. Where is his data being collected in all this? Nowhere. We need to flip that.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance[1]

… there is limited understanding of who perpetrates family violence, why they do, and what works to stop them. As a result, the current intervention system is based on an incomplete understanding of the nature, scale, and scope of the problem. Consequently, it does not provide the most effective and appropriate responses to reduce and end family violence.

No to Violence[2]

Family violence is one of the most pressing social issues facing Victoria—an issue that we must not shy away from. It is pervasive and perpetrated by people from all walks of life. It impacts many, many families.

The Victorian Government's world-leading *Royal Commission into Family Violence* identified a clear path forward for improving the State's response to family violence, and has fundamentally changed the family violence system to better support victim survivors. Victim survivors deserve a system that prioritises their safety and wellbeing, while holding people who use family violence accountable for their behaviour. The courage of victim survivors and their families in sharing their stories continues to shape our response and must remain central to the Victorian Government's goal to end family violence.

And now, it is time to broaden our understanding of people using violence and build our evidence base.

Recognising this, I am pleased to present the Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee's second report for the 60th Parliament, *Building the evidence base: Inquiry into capturing data on people using family violence in Victoria*.

During the inquiry, it was made abundantly clear to the Committee that collecting family violence data, including about those who use family violence, is complex. Data on people using family violence is held in multiple places, by multiple organisations, and is often not comprehensive enough to provide a complete picture.

Improving how governments, agencies, relevant sectors and systems capture data on people who use family violence will increase understanding about why people use family violence. Better information about the drivers, behaviours and patterns

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1 Wendy Anders, Chief Executive Officer, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 12.

2 No to Violence, *Submission 61,* received 14 June 2024, p. 17.

of people who use family violence can then be used to improve the effectiveness of interventions and prevention strategies.

Victoria has made significant strides in capturing and using family violence data for the purposes of managing immediate risk and service delivery. The Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework is playing a crucial role in improving data collection across sectors. This is supported by information sharing schemes that enable this data to be shared between agencies, helping to create a more holistic picture of family violence dynamics. However, continuous improvement is needed to reduce fragmentation and inconsistencies in reporting and enhance data linkage across different systems.

The Committee heard that collecting data on people who use family violence is not straightforward, and caution must be taken to ensure accuracy and to protect victim survivors. Misidentification of the predominant aggressor continues to distort the data collected, harming victim survivors and keeping people who use family violence out of view of systems. To address this, we recommend the establishment of a clear, system-wide process to correct misidentification, ensuring that data collection processes do not reinforce harmful stereotypes or enable system abuse.

Considering the distinct development needs of children and young people who use family violence can improve both service response and data collection, which in turn builds our understanding. Our recommendations focus on refining data systems to provide a more nuanced understanding of how children and young people experience and engage with family violence and how services can better support them.

Elder abuse, an often-hidden form of family violence, also demands greater attention. There is a need for improved data collection to identify risk factors, intervention points, and long-term impacts of elder abuse, and our recommendations target improvements in these areas.

A more comprehensive and coordinated approach to data collection is essential to understanding the full scope of family violence. Expanding data capture to include a broader cross-section of people who use family violence—beyond those already in contact with services—will allow for deeper insights into perpetration trends, risk factors, and intervention outcomes. The Committee has recommended that the Government support and advocate for a population-based survey of people who use family violence to address this gap, which has the potential to shine a light on unreported family violence.

Family violence often remains hidden, and without a more complete evidence base, our ability to develop targeted prevention efforts is constrained. By incorporating qualitative, longitudinal, and multi-method research, we can build a clearer picture of perpetration pathways, protective factors, behavioural change over time, and the long-term effectiveness of interventions. This will provide critical insights into how to prevent violence, support change, and reduce the risk of continued harm. Our recommendations to support new research on people who use family violence that centre practice-based knowledge and qualitative, longitudinal and multi-method

approaches—with priority for projects about those not engaged with services—will play a crucial role in achieving this.

Minimising, addressing and preventing family violence is a collective responsibility. This report highlights the need for a holistic and systemic approach that coordinates and links existing datasets, enhances cross-sector collaboration, and ensures consistency in data standards. Strengthening oversight mechanisms, improving information sharing between agencies, and embedding data-driven decision making into family violence reforms will enable a more comprehensive understanding of people who use family violence, their pathways in and out of violence, and the effectiveness of interventions. By adopting a strategic and whole-of-system approach, Victoria can continue to lead the way in building an evidence base that informs meaningful change and long-term prevention efforts. To support this, the Committee has recommended the Victorian Government establish a whole-of system family violence oversight and continuous improvement mechanism.

This report is a call to action for government, researchers, service providers, and policymakers to continue to work collaboratively in transforming the way we collect and use data on people who use family violence. We must move beyond fragmented, inconsistent, and limited datasets to a coordinated, robust, and evidence-informed approach that enhances prevention, early intervention, and accountability. The complexity of this work cannot be understated and is underscored by the significant breadth and scope of the report's findings and recommendations.

Evidence provided by stakeholders who shared learnings and experiences about barriers to collecting, linking, sharing and using family violence data enriched this report and its recommendations. The Committee is exceptionally grateful to all who shared their ideas to help increase understanding of the cohort of people using family violence.

In particular, the Committee acknowledges the victim survivors of family violence who bravely shared their experiences, and commends their strength and determination to improve the family violence system in Victoria. We are deeply grateful for your contributions and thank you.

I wish to thank my fellow Committee Members, Deputy Chair, Annabelle Cleeland MP, Christine Couzens MP, Chris Crewther MP, Meng Heang Tak MP, Cindy McLeish MP and Jackson Taylor MP, for their contribution to the Inquiry and curiosity in exploring ways to improve Victoria's response to family violence.

On behalf of the Committee, I also extend our gratitude to the Committee Secretariat, Jessica Strout, Katherine Murtagh, Danielle Broadhurst, Fred Toll and Caitlin Connally, as well as the Graphic Design and Publishing team and all parliamentary staff who assisted with this Inquiry, for their invaluable work and support.

Ella George

Ella George MP
Chair

Executive summary

Background: About this Inquiry

There is no single source of information that tells us about the profile and volume of people who use family violence in Victoria—or one single way to build our understanding of this cohort. Data is collected and held in multiple places and used for different purposes—including risk assessment and management, policy development, service planning, research and evaluation activities.

Inquiry stakeholders identified consistent barriers to the collection, sharing and use of data about people who use family violence—all of which contribute to the barriers of achieving a full understanding of this cohort. This report's recommendations seek to address these. Consistent barriers identified by stakeholders were:

- system silos and data fragmentation—many sectors operate in data silos, making it challenging to see all the services someone is using and tracking their journey through sectors and multiple relationships. Data can also be fragmented within an organisation because they may be using multiple, different and unaligned databases.

- data accuracy and reliability—several factors contribute to this, including inconsistent data collection standards, bias in data collection, and data collection not always being meaningful or what is needed. Collecting inaccurate or incomplete data about diversity also contributes, as does the underreporting of family violence.

- organisational capacity and databases—data quality is impacted by the high level of administrative burden, and may be impacted by staff resources and capabilities. Outdated or onerous databases can add to the administrative burden, especially when the data comes in different formats that are difficult to analyse or share.

Part 1: A more purposeful approach

The Committee made nine recommendations to the Victorian Government to ensure Victoria moves towards a more purposeful approach to capturing data on family violence perpetrators/people who use family violence. These recommendations focus on improving data collection, governance and oversight.

A key priority for the Victorian Government should be undertaking a data mapping project to identify existing datasets relevant to people who use family violence. This work will also identify any gaps in the data and therefore, what other data is needed to develop a full understanding of this cohort. The Government should also develop and distribute resources to assist stakeholders and researchers to consider nuance and context when collecting and using data.

Inquiry stakeholders identified many benefits of Indigenous Data Sovereignty, and the Committee has recommended that the Victorian Government prioritise implementing this in family violence research and data collection. Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles will give First Nations communities control over how family violence data related to their communities is collected, captured, interpreted and used. Investment in First Nations-led family violence research, and building the capacity of First Nations organisations in monitoring and evaluating family violence data and intervention initiatives will support this. It is also important that the Government advocate at the national level to amend the 2020 National Agreement on Closing the Gap to explicitly include Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

To ensure a more cohesive and effective approach to family violence reform, relevant plans, strategies, rolling action plans, outcomes, indicators, measures, and reporting must be continually reviewed and reported on publicly, to better align with the Victorian Government's strategic approach to family violence reform. A whole-of-system oversight and continuous improvement mechanism should also be established to enhance accountability and effectiveness.

Recognising the expertise of services and practitioners working with people who use family violence is another critical component of moving towards more purposefully capturing and using data on people who use family violence. Their insights should be used to improve policy and reform, particularly in relation to data collection.

Part 2: Improving data processes

The Committee made twenty-eight recommendations to the Victorian Government and relevant departments to improve data collection, sharing, and analysis related to people who use family violence. These recommendations focus on strengthening training and resources, standardising data collection practices, enhancing cross-sector collaboration, and improving information-sharing mechanisms.

As part of improving current data processes, the Victorian Government should continue to enhance and promote training, resources, and tools to embed the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) framework, particularly in mainstream and universal services that play a role in early identification. Consultation with service providers and people with lived experience is important to ensure data collection on people who use family violence is consistent and accurate. The Committee has recommended that the Government develop and trial a minimum standard dataset, outlining mandatory data points that all service providers and agencies must collect.

To improve workforce capacity, training and upskilling of specialist and core workforces on best-practice family violence data collection and its uses should be prioritised. The Victorian Government should also, as a priority, work with service providers and communities to support data collection on the family violence experiences of Victoria's diverse communities.

Misidentification of a victim survivor as the person using violence was a key concern identified by many stakeholders. The Committee has recommended that the Victorian Government develops a clear system-wide process to correct misidentification in family violence records, including ensuring that service providers and agencies can validate information received and shared.

The Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's (FVRIM) reports will continue to guide future stages of Victoria's family violence reform agenda. The Committee has recommended that the Victorian Government publicly report on the actions it has taken in response to key FVRIM reports relevant to this inquiry.

Stakeholders noted the importance of aligning data systems and bringing together disparate databases that are used by different service providers. As part of its business case to redevelop the Incident Reporting Information System and other data systems, the Victorian Government should consult with service providers and peak bodies to identify key requirements for efficient data capture, storage, and sharing.

The report recommends that ways to holistically and systematically upgrade service providers' databases be explored to allow for better organisation, extraction, and analysis of data on people using family violence. Greater alignment of existing datasets and improved integration and linkage between government and service provider data systems is needed. Automated information sharing or better linkage between agency and service provider databases, should also be explored to streamline access to critical information.

Many stakeholders offered suggestions to enhance risk assessment and management, and the role that data collection, storage and its use plays. The report recommends that consideration should be given to rolling out access to Central Information Point (CIP) reports to all Tier 1 workforces and expanding the data included in CIP reports to include national, interstate, and other relevant sources. An integrated and secure mechanism should be developed to facilitate more timely and proactive information sharing between service providers and agencies within the family violence sector. This should be supported by clear protocols that promote information sharing based on evidence-informed understanding, defined responsibilities, consistent processes, and collaborative practice.

The Risk Assessment and Management Panels program should be reviewed and insights from data analysis—including profiles of people using family violence—used to inform potential program expansion.

Improving the capture of data on perpetrators' recidivism, including behaviours that do not result in contact with the criminal justice system will help build an understanding of people who use family violence.

Collaboration across sectors, including family violence, alcohol and other drugs, mental health, healthcare, and community legal services, should be prioritised to align future database development and data collection with best-practice standards. To further

enhance understanding of people using family violence, relationships between different sectors—both inside and outside the public sector—should be strengthened, including through a multi-sector taskforce to inform data reforms.

Access to relevant national and federal datasets is critical. The Victorian Government should work to establish memoranda of understanding with the Australian Government and relevant federal data custodians to enable access to relevant federal datasets on people who use family violence in Victoria. Strong advocacy at a federal level to ensure that the Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) has ongoing access to relevant family law data held by the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia will also help inform long-term analysis of family violence trends in Victoria.

Formal cross-border information-sharing arrangements should be established with other state and territory governments and the Australian Government. Aligning family violence definitions, risk ratings, and data collection standards will ensure consistency and enhance effectiveness across jurisdictions.

Part 3: Where we need to know more

The Committee made ten recommendations to the Victorian Government focused on areas where more knowledge about people using family violence is needed—including areas where there is less understanding. To increase knowledge in these areas, the recommendations target building the family violence data and information that is collected about: sexual violence, technology-facilitated abuse, elder abuse, children and young people, and perpetrator interventions.

Inquiry stakeholders advised the Committee that family violence can co-occur with other forms of violence, and that more needs to be done to collect data and information where this takes place. A whole of government approach should be implemented to better understand the co-occurrence of sexual violence with family violence. A review of how sexual violence and technology-facilitated abuse are addressed in the MARAM framework is also necessary to ensure an effective response. The Victorian Government's recent affirmative consent reforms need to be regularly reviewed to assess their impact where it applies to the relationship between sexual and family violence.

To improve responses to elder abuse, the report recommends the development of a specific MARAM tool for elder abuse, along with enhanced capacity-building for service workers to identify and collect data more effectively. The Family Violence Outcomes Framework should also include specific outcomes related to elder abuse.

Enhancing data collection and service responses for children and young people who experience or use family violence is another important focus. The Victorian Government should collaborate with specialist family violence service providers and Victoria Police to review how data on children and young people is captured, used, and understood. This should be supported by the development of a data collection, storage, linkage, and reporting framework. Once released, the impact of the child

and young person MARAM tool should be monitored, reviewed, and reported on, with a focus on improving information sharing between The Orange Door (TOD) Network and youth-specific service providers. To strengthen early intervention efforts, the Government should support service providers to improve data collection and analysis on children and young people, applying an age and developmental lens while recognising intersectionality, capacity for change, and the potential impact of labels.

Inquiry stakeholders identified programs for people using family violence as an important area of focus, presenting a key opportunity to increase understanding of people using family violence. The Victorian Government should take action on recommendations from the FVRIM's *Report on service responses for perpetrators* (2023). This includes implementing and publicly reporting on reforms such as the creation of a centralised platform to monitor perpetrator intervention waitlists and program completions, scaling up promising pilot interventions, and updating the Minimum Standards for Men's Behaviour Change programs.

Longitudinal studies can provide significant insights into what works, and what does not, when it comes to family violence interventions and building an understanding of people using violence. The Victorian Government should consult with the family violence sector to develop and implement an integrated, consistent, and strategic outcomes and evaluation framework for family violence programs and interventions. This framework should capture longitudinal and qualitative data.

Part 4: Deepening understanding

The Committee made fourteen recommendations to the Victorian Government to advance data collection, research and analysis about people who use family violence—including those who are not involved with any part of the family violence service system (like courts and police). These recommendations aim to improve the evidence base for policy and intervention effectiveness, strengthen research partnerships, and support ethical and comprehensive approaches to understanding family violence trajectories.

The Victorian Government should support the capture, extraction, and use of administrative and qualitative data collected during service provision, including Men's Referral Service phoneline data, and MARAM assessment and case file data. This can then be used for research and analysis to inform evidence-based policy and measure intervention effectiveness. Investment in program evaluation and data collection is essential to capture the experiences and impacts of services on people using family violence that can also help inform research.

To deepen understanding of perpetration, the Victorian Government should support new studies and research projects that centre practice-based knowledge and employ qualitative, longitudinal, and multi-method approaches. A dedicated longitudinal study should be undertaken to track individuals from different backgrounds and with varying levels of system contact to provide insights into family violence trajectories over time.

The availability of linked family violence data through the Victorian Social Investment Integrated Data Resource needs to be promoted to encourage more research on the profile, volume, drivers and pathways of people who use family violence. A targeted data linkage project to map the journey of people using family violence through the service systems and evaluate intervention and program effectiveness and outcomes should be undertaken.

Inquiry stakeholders noted that existing international and population-based surveys tend to focus on victim-survivor perspectives, providing limited data on people who use violence and why. Stakeholders identified a population-based survey of people who use family violence as an opportunity to provide new insights and a more representative sample. The Victorian Government should advocate, at a federal level, for a national population-based survey on people who use family violence, and in the absence of such a study, a state-level pilot should be considered.

Ethics in family violence research are crucial. The Victorian Government should provide clear guidance to researchers and service providers on how and when to undertake research on perpetration (and with people using/who have used family violence) in a consistent, ethical, and safe manner. Key relevant stakeholders—including government agencies, the TOD Network, and researchers—should be supported to access and analyse family violence data to strengthen research collaboration.

Increasing publicly available family violence data will encourage further research and analysis to better understand people using family violence. Victorian Government departments holding information on people who use family violence should be supported to prepare their datasets for analysis. Service providers should also be enabled to contribute their data to broader social service datasets, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of family violence.

The Committee has recommended that the Victorian Government increase CSA's resources and capacity to undertake research and analysis on people using family violence, acquire additional family violence data sources, and enhance the granularity of social service data linkage. The Coroners Court of Victoria should also be supported in its efforts to investigate and analyse all family violence-related deaths, with a focus on coding, analysing, and disseminating associated data to relevant stakeholders for research purposes.

Research on people using family violence should build on what is already known and inform future government planning and policy through a systematic, strategic, integrated and long-term approach. The Victorian Government should report on the outcomes of the Family Violence Research Agenda 2021–2024 and subsequently develop a new research strategy or plan to identify future research priorities. This will ensure current and planned research to improve understanding of people using family violence is considered cohesively and continues this important work to build the evidence base.

Conclusion: Moving forward

Family violence is a complex problem and achieving a fuller understanding of people who use family violence will help the Victorian Government and service providers in designing appropriate support services and intervention programs. Data collection is an important part of this understanding.

The report's recommendations support the Victorian Government to adopt a systematic and strategic approach to improving data collection, sharing, use and analysis about people using family violence. Inquiry stakeholders identified many benefits to the Government adopting this approach, including:

- informing big picture decision-making—including guiding the Victorian and Australian Governments' evidence-based, effective and targeted approach to ending family violence.

- tracking outcomes and measuring efficacy—tracking progress against the Victorian Government's family violence reforms to understand what works, and measuring efficacy of interventions to better inform support for people using family violence leading to behaviour change.

- understanding and providing support and services across the system—better assessing, managing and developing strategies on risk for victim survivors, providing them with programs and keeping them safe.

- enabling nuanced and normalised discussion—challenging stereotypes and myths, and normalising work preventing further violence and research and data collection on perpetration of family violence.

- understanding trends—including common characteristics and risk factors for people using family violence, engagement with services and systems, re-occurring offending, high-risk individuals and referral pathways. This can hold people who use violence accountable, keep them in view and identify people who use family violence which are currently undetected. Understanding trends can also inform the development of rehabilitation and education programs.

- understanding and managing demand for services—inform regional and statewide understanding of current and future service demand (and required resource allocation), identify service gaps and opportunities for innovation. This can be used to plan, design and evaluate services, improve client outcomes and reduce the administrative burden on frontline services.

- tailoring services for different communities—better understand community need and prevalence to plan and deliver programs, tailor interventions, programs and systems, and develop more effective interventions and nuanced responses that disrupt family violence trajectories.

- empowering First Nations communities—data on family violence in First Nations communities can be used to prioritise prevention and early intervention by addressing drivers such as racism and intergenerational trauma. The Government should support the development and implementation of Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

Addressing family violence is a collective responsibility. The intersections of family violence with different aspects of peoples' lives means that policies, strategies, plans, frameworks and ongoing reform activity must align across different sectors. The report's recommendations aim to increase understanding about people using family violence and strengthen the Victorian Government's response to family violence in our community.

Findings and recommendations

Part 1 | How to move toward a more purposeful approach

FINDING 1: Collecting data about people who use family violence is complex and there are inconsistences in what, when and how this data is collected. A comprehensive data mapping project is needed to identify existing datasets relevant to Victoria, the information they hold, and the questions that can be answered about people using family violence by linking or analysing this data. This project will highlight data gaps and inform priorities for future data collection. **19**

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Victorian Government undertake a data mapping project to precisely identify existing datasets relevant to people using family violence in Victoria. This project should:

- outline the information these datasets hold, or could provide

- explore the questions that can or cannot be answered through data analysis and linkage

- define the scope and nature of existing gaps. **19**

FINDING 2: People from all backgrounds perpetrate family violence but current data represents only a small proportion of people perpetrating or experiencing family violence. Existing administrative and publicly reported data on people using family violence may be biased and skewed towards people in contact with the service and justice systems, who are often the most disadvantaged, stigmatised and marginalised people in the community. Improving data capability to capture people using family violence who do not engage with justice or service systems is essential to building understanding of all people who use family violence across different groups and communities. **26**

FINDING 3: Perpetrator profiles based on demographic or identity characteristics risk stigmatising particular groups as more or less likely to use family violence. This means profiling can enable some perpetrators to avoid accountability if they do not fit a common stereotype. Perpetrator profiles should focus on attitudes, behaviours and experiences rather than demographic or identity traits, as these profiles will not apply universally. Family violence data and its analysis must be contextualised for it to be effective in building a fuller picture of people who use family violence to inform policy, responses, interventions and research that supports all Victorians. **26**

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Victorian Government develop and distribute resources to assist stakeholders and researchers to consider nuance and context in data collection, sharing, linkage, use, analysis and research about people who use family violence, including how to recognise the limitations of data (for example, structural inequities or invisible and historically hidden violence) and involve people with lived experience and expertise to understand the complexities. **26**

FINDING 4: Adopting and embedding Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles in family violence research and data collection processes will give First Nations' communities greater control over how family violence data about First Nations peoples is collected and interpreted, and support better outcomes for First Nations' communities. **29**

FINDING 5: Applying Indigenous Data Sovereignty across all the findings and recommendations made in this Inquiry report is important to ensure the benefits of any government actions taken in response to the report are shared by First Nations peoples. **29**

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Victorian Government prioritise the implementation of Indigenous Data Sovereignty for family violence research and data collection and adopt the *Maiam nayri Wingara,* the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty Collective, Indigenous Data Sovereignty techniques and principles, while concurrently enhancing information sharing where appropriate. **29**

RECOMMENDATION 4: The Victorian Government support First Nations organisations to:

- build capacity to monitor and evaluate family violence data, family violence prevention and intervention initiatives and invest in First Nations-led family violence research

- work with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in Victoria to actively promote the value and learnings of these activities. **29**

RECOMMENDATION 5: The Victorian Government advocate at a national level for the 2020 National Agreement on Closing the Gap to be amended to include Indigenous Data Sovereignty, along with enhanced information sharing where appropriate, as part of the outcome statement for Priority Reform 4, accompanied by the adoption of the definitions of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance, as detailed in the *Maiam nayri Wingara*. **29**

FINDING 6: To achieve a more holistic understanding of people using family violence, including risk profiles, service system gaps, efficacy of intervention strategies and emerging data trends, the Victorian Government must continually look for opportunities to better align and improve coordination, oversight and accountability across and within the family violence system. **33**

RECOMMENDATION 6: The Victorian Government continually review relevant plans, strategies, rolling action plans, outcomes, indicators, measures and reporting to ensure they better align with the Government's strategic approach to family violence reform and are easy to navigate, and regularly publicly report on actions taken. This includes linking the implementation of recommendations made in this Inquiry report to the Victorian Government's overarching strategies, frameworks and plans. **33**

FINDING 7: Victoria's Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, which ceased in 2023, was a nation-leading oversight mechanism and ensured accountability for reform and progress after the Royal Commission into Family Violence. **36**

FINDING 8: An effective whole-of-system family violence oversight mechanism in Victoria would ensure systems accountability (how the family violence and different sectors operate and collaborate), and oversight of enhancements to data collection, storage, sharing, linkage, use, analysis and research in relation to people who use family violence. The mechanism could drive, inform and improve continuous reform, strategic alignment, and holistic data collection and service delivery. **36**

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Victorian Government establish an effective whole-of-system family violence oversight and continuous improvement mechanism to ensure systems accountability and oversight of enhancements to data collection, sharing, linkage, use, analysis and research in relation to people who use family violence. Once established, the mechanism should review and publicly report on the actions taken in response to Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's reports. **36**

FINDING 9: There is an opportunity to improve the quality and extent of data collected by service providers relating to people who use family violence, by increasing understanding of data collection purposes and collaboration between the Victorian Government and family violence sector, as well as incentivising data collection. Continually improving regular and structured engagement with Family Violence Regional Integration Committees, local councils and services and practitioners working with people who use family violence could help achieve this. **40**

RECOMMENDATION 8: The Victorian Government promote and recognise the expertise of services and practitioners by working with family violence service providers and stakeholders to improve policy and reform, including as it relates to data collection on people using family violence, by:

- consulting on the best methods to increase transparency with stakeholders about what data it collects and how it is used

- providing feedback opportunities on data utility to enable continuous improvement in data collection and sharing

- increasing dialogue and collaboration about the priorities and purposes of data collection for government, peak bodies and service providers

- communicating the defined goals and purposes of data collection about people who use family violence. For example, this could include creating a people using family violence experts panel or building on the work of existing stakeholder groups, like Family Violence Regional Integration Committees, to represent service providers working with people who use family violence. **40**

FINDING 10: Data currently collected by the Victorian Government for performance measures and program reporting for family violence services and programs for people who use family violence does not measure outcomes or demonstrate service and program effectiveness over time. **43**

FINDING 11: Performance measures, program reporting and the Family Violence Outcomes Framework should use data to measure outcomes and impacts to provide a deeper insight into what makes services and interventions successful, better recognise the complexity of behaviour change journeys, support effective decision-making and funding priorities, and help demonstrate impact, prevention and value for money. **44**

FINDING 12: Performance measures, program reporting and the Family Violence Outcomes Framework should be co-designed with the family violence sector, centre practice expertise and measure impacts through qualitative and quantitative data, and be accompanied by upskilling for service providers and practitioners to measure outcomes and impacts. **45**

FINDING 13: Reporting requirements for family violence programs and services could be improved to support more meaningful data collection and use, and to enhance the Victorian Government's ability to capture longitudinal data about people using family violence, including monitoring change over time. **46**

RECOMMENDATION 9: The Victorian Government improve and prioritise family violence program and service agreement reporting by:

- streamlining grant and funding agreement requirements (with particular focus given to any new programs)

- allowing data collection in formats that support research

- building consistent monitoring evaluation strategies into programs

- encouraging innovation and flexibility among service providers in the ways they report.   **46**

FINDING 14: The Victorian Government acknowledges that current measures to assess the impacts of family violence reforms are limited, and do not provide insights into perpetrators' accountability. The Government continues to work to improve outcomes and indicators for *Domain 3: Perpetrators (Perpetrators are held accountable, connected and take responsibility for stopping their violence)* under the Family Violence Outcomes Framework and strengthen how progress is measured over time.   **48**

Part 2 | How to improve current data processes

FINDING 15: Victoria's Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) is the foundation of consistent and accurate data collection about people who use family violence. Continuing to enhance and promote existing MARAM training, resources and tools to support service providers to embed MARAM and improve understanding of MARAM responsibilities will help improve the collection of data about people using family violence.   **59**

RECOMMENDATION 10: The Victorian Government:

- continue to enhance and promote training, resources and tools to help service providers embed the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) and improve understanding of MARAM responsibilities, including to improve the collection of data about people using family violence

- report publicly on actions taken in response to the *MARAM Framework 5-year Evidence Review* and the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's *Legislative review of family violence information sharing and risk management* (2023). **59**

FINDING 16: Building on Victoria's Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework, the consistency and accuracy of data capture on people who use family violence can be improved by:

- standardising data collection practices

- promoting consistent use of terminology and techniques for more accessible and inclusive data collection methods, including ensuring everyone who collects, enters and analyses data understands the data points

- implementing a minimum dataset for service providers on people who use family violence. **62**

RECOMMENDATION 11: The Victorian Government consult with service providers and people with lived experience of family violence, including victim survivors and people using family violence, about the best ways to:

- promote consistency and accuracy of data collection on people who use family violence by standardising data collection practices, methods, tools, templates and standards

- ensure use of accessible and inclusive data collection techniques. **62**

RECOMMENDATION 12: Following completion of Recommendation 1 to undertake a data mapping project, the Victorian Government develop and trial a minimum standard dataset, outlining the mandatory data that is to be collected by all service providers and agencies about people who use family violence. This minimum standard dataset should be developed within 12 months after completion of the data mapping project. **63**

FINDING 17: Collecting data about or from people who use family violence requires experience, skill and practice expertise, often developed over time. Skill development in data collection practices and uses beyond the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework is an opportunity to strengthen family violence workforce capabilities to promote data quality and integrity, and increase knowledge about privacy, security and bias. **66**

RECOMMENDATION 13: The Victorian Government prioritise training and upskilling of the specialist and core workforces (Tier 1 and Tier 2 in Family Safety Victoria's *Responding to Family Violence Capability Framework*) on best practice family and sexual violence data collection and uses. **66**

FINDING 18: Incomplete and inaccurate data from Victoria's diverse communities about people experiencing or using family violence contributes to gaps in our understanding of people who use family violence in Victoria. **71**

FINDING 19: Consistent and good practice data collection about the family violence experiences of Victoria's diverse communities can improve culturally safe and accessible services; help identify who is not accessing support and reduce barriers to accessing support; assist to identify early intervention opportunities, tailor responses, provide targeted support and allocate funding to high-priority areas; and enable better research.   **71**

RECOMMENDATION 14: The Victorian Government work with service providers and communities to promote and support data collection about the family violence experiences of Victoria's diverse communities by:

- enhancing training on data collection for diversity and its purpose, and how to confidently ask sensitive questions

- ensuring the Family Violence Data Collection Framework reflects current practice and aligns with the Australian Bureau of Statistics Standards

- developing and distributing enhanced practice guidance

- ensuring translation services are used

- mandating cultural safety training tailored to different sectors

- reviewing how data on diversity is collected through its databases (for example, Integrated Report and Information System) to align data fields with best practice.

This work should be prioritised and reviewed on an ongoing basis.   **72**

FINDING 20: Victoria Police L17 reports are designed to practically and comprehensively assess and manage family violence risk, meaning use of the data L17s capture about people who use family violence should be viewed in this context. Continuous improvement and refinement of L17s and data capture processes can improve Victoria Police's ability to further understand, identify and accurately record family violence data, particularly about First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse and LGBTIQA+ people, and people with disability; and sexual violence, mental illness and substance use.   **75**

FINDING 21: Misidentification of the predominant aggressor skews statistics on family violence prevalence, assists perpetrators to avoid accountability and contributes to adverse outcomes for victim survivors, such as lack of access to support services, exposure to systems abuse, increased risk of ongoing violence and forced separation of families.   **79**

FINDING 22: Diverse communities can be disproportionately impacted by misidentification. Misidentification can mask the data on the experiences of family violence of people from diverse communities and people using family violence.   **79**

FINDING 23: There is no clear process to correct misidentification and due to inconsistent data capture, the scale of the issue is unknown.

79

RECOMMENDATION 15: The Victorian Government develop a clear system-wide process to correct misidentification in family violence records by 2027. This should include ensuring that service providers or agencies can validate information received and shared. Data on the prevalence of misidentification and the effectiveness of corrective actions should be collected to inform future reform.

79

RECOMMENDATION 16: The Victorian Government publicly report by 2027 on how it will implement the suggested actions, including timelines, in the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's report *Monitoring Victoria's Family Violence Reforms: Accurate Identification of the Predominant Aggressor* (2021).

79

FINDING 24: Early identification can build a fuller picture of people who use family violence by collecting data at an earlier point in time, for example on triggers or escalation points. People who use family violence are often in contact with mainstream and universal services, prior to contact with any specialist services, highlighting the importance of these services in recognising and responding early to risk factors for the experience and/or use of family violence, and referring people to support.

83

FINDING 25: The Victorian Government's Family Violence Outcomes Framework Measuring and Monitoring Implementation Strategy and Early Intervention Investment Framework recognise the importance of early identification and intervention to respond to family violence, improving impact and outcome measures, scaling up the trial of innovative early intervention initiatives, and building the evidence base on their effectiveness.

84

RECOMMENDATION 17: The Victorian Government review the Family Violence Outcomes Framework Measuring and Monitoring Implementation Strategy and Early Intervention Investment Framework to ensure family violence prevention and early intervention activities for people who use family violence are aligned and linked to quantifiable impact and outcome measures.

85

FINDING 26: Increased training for early identification points across mainstream and universal workforces will strengthen data collection about people who use family violence. Training on how to identify family violence and collect data about it is especially important because if the question is not asked, the data is not collected.

88

RECOMMENDATION 18: The Victorian Government embed the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework, and improve data collection on people who use family violence, across early identification points in mainstream and universal services, including through enhanced training and education.   **88**

RECOMMENDATION 19: The Victorian Government publicly report by 30 June 2026 on actions taken in response to the proposals in the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's report *Early identification of family violence within universal services* (2022).   **88**

FINDING 27: Supporting initiatives similar to the Specialist Family Violence Advisor program, and the Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence program and Practice Lead roles, in the health sector and other mainstream and universal services interacting with people who use family violence, could enable greater data collection about people using family violence. These initiatives could help build capacity to collect data through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework and provide specialist support, model best practice and promote consistent data collection.   **90**

RECOMMENDATION 20: The Victorian Government support roles similar to Specialist Family Violence Advisors and Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence Practice Leads, in the health sector and other mainstream and universal services interacting with people who use family violence.   **90**

FINDING 28: Addressing limitations, like privacy and consent, to data collection and sharing about people who use family violence in and from the private sector (for example, banks, workplaces, insurance and real estate agencies) presents a significant opportunity to identify people whose violence is largely hidden and would help the Victorian Government to form a fuller picture of people who use family violence.   **90**

RECOMMENDATION 21: The Victorian Government prioritise consultation on how to share information about family violence between public and private sectors, and how to best facilitate engagement with the private sector to collect and share data about people who use family violence.   **91**

FINDING 29: Underreporting of family violence means that publicly reported statistics are not accurately representative. Increasing trust in services and awareness about family violence would help encourage people to report family violence and seek help. Increasing reporting and awareness of family violence are listed in the Victorian Government's Family Violence Outcomes Framework. Continued investment in efforts to achieve these outcomes will help ensure data on people using family violence is accurately representative.

93

FINDING 30: Service providers across multiple sectors sometimes operate in silos when it comes to what, when and how data captured on people using family violence is meaningfully collected, linked and shared. This means that some information is only accessible to certain services, making it challenging to see all the services someone is using and to track their movements through sectors and multiple relationships.

98

FINDING 31: A centralised and systematic means to record data on people who use family violence accessing different services across multiple systems would provide significant benefits. This includes creating a real-time, dynamic, consistent view of people and behavioural profiles, identifying people who use violence against multiple victim survivors, promoting accountability, enabling better research and analysis, and overcoming data collection and sharing barriers. For example, needing to know which service provider to request data from, untimely information sharing, double data entry and inconsistent data entry practices.

98

FINDING 32: Opportunities to improve recording of data on people who use family violence in Victoria to provide better visibility and data on dynamic risk and patterns of coercive control, non-physical violence and family violence against multiple partners include:

- improving the storage of dynamic Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) data captured at different points over time

- creating a shared system to upload MARAM risk assessments

- creating system overlays for outdated databases

- improving MARAM tools in the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform and other information and reporting systems.

101

FINDING 33: Opportunities to improve current Victorian Government family violence data systems include exploring ways to minimise the number of times service providers supply or analyse data, allow interfaces to more easily enter information and capture data on diversity, sexual violence, and information relevant to service providers.

101

RECOMMENDATION 22: The Victorian Government business case to redevelop the Integrated Report and Information System and other systems:

- include consultation with service providers and peak bodies on key requirements for efficient data capture (including the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework risk assessments), storage and sharing to support a fuller and more accurate picture of people who use family violence

- meaningfully build on and bring together current and disparate databases used to collect data on people using family violence, to reduce the administrative burden and maintain the utility of existing data. **101**

FINDING 34: Tools for Risk Assessment and Management, an online data system with inbuilt Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework tools available across the service system, streamlines processes and supports data collection consistency and dynamic and quicker risk assessment by allowing practitioners to pre-populate assessment tools for subsequent assessments. **103**

RECOMMENDATION 23: The Victorian Government better promote the ability of service providers to adopt the Tools for Risk Assessment and Management online data system with inbuilt Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework tools, including the Adult Using Family Violence Comprehensive Assessment Tool. **103**

FINDING 35: A holistic and strategic approach to improving service providers' databases and data system capabilities through digital solutions that support improved extraction and analysis functionality is required to better organise, extract, and analyse risk assessment data and case notes to help build understanding of family violence dynamics, profiles and behaviours of people who use family violence. **104**

RECOMMENDATION 24: The Victorian Government explore ways to holistically and systematically upgrade service providers' databases to organise, extract and analyse data about people using family violence, including by supporting service providers to develop enhanced case or data management systems and tools. **105**

FINDING 36: Better linking existing data systems can facilitate more efficient and effective information sharing and risk analysis and management, and improve visibility of system journeys for victim survivors and people who use family violence. Improving data systems linkage can reduce the potential for data loss, inaccurate transfer of data, the administrative burden for service providers, additional reporting requirements, data inconsistencies, how often victim survivors retell their stories and the risk of privacy or security breaches. Applying this approach across all the findings and recommendations made in this Inquiry report is important to ensure the benefits of technology are considered in any government actions taken in response to the report. **106**

RECOMMENDATION 25: The Victorian Government work to better align existing datasets, and integrate and link existing government and service provider databases and data systems, for example through system overlays to connect and aggregate information and improved database interoperability to share data like Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management risk assessments and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme requests directly between databases. **106**

FINDING 37: Enabling automated information sharing between Victoria Police, the Magistrates' Court of Victoria, Corrections Victoria, The Orange Door Network and specialist family violence service providers will improve efficient and timely information sharing and service provision. For example, by providing a list of all family violence intervention order matters to be heard in court each day and improving visibility over whether a person using family violence completes a program across the system. **108**

RECOMMENDATION 26: The Victorian Government explore automated information sharing about people using family violence or better linkage between agency and service provider databases. **108**

FINDING 38: Expanding the information included in Central Information Point (CIP) reports and the number of service providers who can access CIP reports would facilitate more informed and impactful services, create greater awareness about historic and current family violence, reduce the time service providers wait before receiving information, and reduce the number of times victim survivors retell their stories. **111**

RECOMMENDATION 27: The Victorian Government consider rolling out access to Central Information Point (CIP) reports to all Tier 1 workforces, and seek to include in CIP reports additional national and interstate data, intersectional demographic data, and data on how people using family violence engage with the service system, non-government entities, and tolerance and consumption of services. **111**

FINDING 39: Increasing proactive and timely information sharing about people who use family violence consistently across agencies and service providers will improve visibility of perpetration patterns and behaviours, including against multiple victim survivors, and support dynamic risk management. The Victorian Government's current review of the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme Ministerial Guidelines is an opportunity to continue to improve this. Efforts to align internal agencies policies and increase capacity and understanding of risk-relevant information and where to proactively share information will help enhance the benefits of updates to the Ministerial Guidelines. **117**

FINDING 40: Proactive and greater information sharing, and more engagement and collaboration between the Magistrates' Court of Victoria, The Orange Door Network and people using family violence, sexual violence and victim survivor services would ensure risk assessment and case management is transparent and achieves better outcomes and understanding of people using family violence through collaborative practice. **121**

RECOMMENDATION 28: The Victorian Government explore options to implement an integrated and secure mechanism to facilitate more timely and proactive information sharing (including Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme requests and responses, and analysis of data on the profile of people using family violence) between service providers and agencies in the family violence sector to improve understanding of people who use family violence. **122**

RECOMMENDATION 29: The Victorian Government progress and report publicly by June 2026 on actions taken in response to the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's *Legislative review of family violence information sharing and risk management* (2023) to promote timely and proactive information sharing. This includes in relation to the recommendations to:

- require Information Sharing Entities to respond to requests for information within a reasonable timeframe by amending Part 5A of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic)

- update content on proactive information sharing in the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme Ministerial Guidelines. **122**

RECOMMENDATION 30: The Victorian Government develop protocols to promote information sharing about people who use family violence that:

- build consistent and evidence-informed understanding between different sectors on what is risk-relevant information that can be shared under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme

- communicate whose responsibility it is to receive proactive information sharing reports

- implement consistent and transparent processes to share information

- support collaborative practice and relationship building between The Orange Door (TOD) Network and other family violence services providers, including by promoting the role of TODs in facilitating information sharing, and providing guidance on sharing victim survivor contact details and case information (with consent, where appropriate). **122**

FINDING 41: Risk Assessment and Management Panels (RAMPs) are a best practice example of an extensive information sharing and collaborative practice that enables timely, streamlined and effective risk management and information sharing. A similar approach could be implemented across the family violence system, or access to RAMP data and information sharing processes expanded. **123**

RECOMMENDATION 31: The Victorian Government review by June 2026 the Risk Assessment and Management Panels' (RAMPs') program and share insights from data analysis on its effectiveness, profiles of people using family violence managed by RAMPs, and opportunities to expand RAMPs' role to include assessment and management of lower risk family violence cases to improve understanding of people using family violence. **123**

FINDING 42: Better capturing data on recidivism outside of the criminal justice system (including from victim survivors, as appropriate) will help build a better understanding of people who use family violence, the volume of perpetrators, recidivism (including against multiple victim survivors), perpetrator behaviour and the effectiveness of interventions. **124**

RECOMMENDATION 32: The Victorian Government work to capture data on perpetrators' recidivism, including recidivistic behaviours that do not result in contact with the criminal justice system. **124**

FINDING 43: Improving the data collection systems of the alcohol and drug, mental health, health and hospital, and community legal sectors would help capture better data on people who use family violence, contributing to a fuller understanding of the profile, volume and service contact patterns of this cohort. This includes ways to:

- improve data on people using family violence in the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Collection system or the new mental health client system

- make it easier for hospitals to record, extract and analyse family violence data

- extend the implementation of modern case management systems to all 49 community legal centres in Victoria. **128**

RECOMMENDATION 33: The Victorian Government work with service providers across the family violence, alcohol and other drugs, mental health, health and hospital, and community legal sectors to ensure that future database development and data collection protocols align with best practice family violence data collection standards. **128**

FINDING 44: Formalising and improving relationships between different sectors will promote better family violence information sharing, collaborative practice, and communication, and help identify the co-occurrence of different forms of family violence, or of family violence and other related issues. This will help present a more accurate picture of people who use family violence to inform risk assessment and management, and enable better reflection on what services promote positive behaviour change. **131**

RECOMMENDATION 34: The Victorian Government enhance understanding of people using violence through collaboration and relationships between different sectors (both inside and outside of the public sector), including the alcohol and drug, mental health, health and hospital (such as GPs), legal and family violence sectors, to ensure a strategic and holistic approach to family violence (as well as other) data reforms. This should include creating a multi-sector taskforce to inform data reforms, analysing data to develop strategic partnerships and promoting information sharing and collaborative practice. **131**

FINDING 45: Providing the Victorian Government with greater access to consistent and comparable federal data would help advance knowledge and understanding about people who use family violence, including to support the identification, assessment and management of family violence and inform more comprehensive research, analysis and evaluation to inform policy. **134**

RECOMMENDATION 35: The Victorian Government work to establish memoranda of understanding with the Australian Government and relevant federal data custodians to enable access to federal data and datasets relevant to people who use family violence in Victoria, including for the Centre for Victorian Data Linkage and Crime Statistics Agency, to enable de-identified data linkage, and for service providers to inform risk assessment and management. **134**

FINDING 46: It is deeply concerning that a Victorian Magistrates' Court may issue a Family Violence Intervention Order against a perpetrator, while that same perpetrator is being granted access to children involved in the same family violence incident in the federal Family Court. Rectifying this breakdown in information sharing should be a national priority. **136**

FINDING 47: The National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems is an opportunity to support informed and appropriate decision-making to better manage the risk of family violence. There is an opportunity to increase access to family law data across state and federal jurisdictions to inform research and analysis. **136**

RECOMMENDATION 36: The Victorian Government strongly advocate at a federal level for the Crime Statistics Agency to have ongoing access to relevant family law data held by the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia to inform long-term analysis of family violence trends. **136**

FINDING 48: Establishing sustainable and formalised family violence information sharing arrangements between Australian state and territory jurisdictions will improve Victoria's ability to address family violence risk and understand people who use family violence. **137**

FINDING 49: Aligning family violence definitions, risk ratings and data collection standards across Australia will create an opportunity for better data sharing across jurisdictions. This will provide a greater sample size and more consistent and comparable datasets, enhance informed decision-making, and improve Victoria's understanding of people who use family violence. **138**

RECOMMENDATION 37: The Victorian Government advocate for and formalise cross-border family violence information sharing arrangements with other state and territory governments and the Australian Government, consider what legislative barriers may prevent this, and align family violence definitions, risk ratings and data collection standards. **138**

Part 3 | What do we need to know more about

FINDING 50: To achieve a full understanding of people who use family violence, the evidence base needs to be strengthened. This includes improving the data and information that is collected on:

- the demographics, intersectionality, contexts and life courses of people who use family violence

- how family violence systems, programs and services work and interact

- the prevalence and impacts of family violence

- the manifestation and impacts of gendered drivers and reinforcing factors of family violence

- co-occurring and interlinked forms of family violence and other issues. **155**

FINDING 51: Sexual violence is a form of family violence. Existing data on sexual and family violence can be better used to drive change, improve services and generate new insight to build understanding about people using sexual and family violence. This can be achieved by improving the functionality of databases to extract data on sexual violence, integrating and analysing existing relevant datasets, sharing more social service data and empowering sexual violence service providers to own, link and analyse their own data. **159**

RECOMMENDATION 38: The Victorian Government, in consultation with the sexual violence services sector, implement a whole of government approach to better understand the co-occurrence of sexual violence with family or domestic violence. This should include the development of a strategy to improve data capture on people who use sexual and family violence, and including sexual violence in a minimum dataset trial. **159**

FINDING 52: The Victorian Government's *Strong Foundations* includes family and sexual violence involving technology as an improvement area. This presents an opportunity to strategically build the evidence base about sexual violence and technology-facilitated abuse through database enhancements, increased data sharing and research. Learnings from this work can be applied in developing a whole of government approach to better understand the co-occurrence of sexual violence with family or domestic violence. **160**

FINDING 53: To increase data capture on sexual violence and technology-facilitated abuse in a family violence context, a better understanding of how this data is currently collected (and shared) through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework, L17s, Family Violence Intervention Orders and courts is needed. **161**

RECOMMENDATION 39: Given the rise of technology-facilitated abuse, the Victorian Government review by June 2026 how sexual violence and technology-facilitated abuse are covered in the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework, and consider whether amendments are required to ensure the range and complexity of these forms of violence are being captured to achieve a fuller understanding of people using family violence. It is important that the Victorian Government work with Victoria Police and courts to share learnings from this review. **161**

FINDING 54: A review of the *Justice Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Act 2022* (Vic) in relation to affirmative consent could help to understand the impacts of the affirmative consent reforms and the relationship between sexual and family violence. **162**

RECOMMENDATION 40: The Victorian Government undertake a regular review of the *Justice Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Act 2022* (Vic). The first review should occur at the earliest opportunity and consider the impacts of the affirmative consent reforms, and the relationship between sexual and family violence.   **162**

FINDING 55: Improved reporting, identification, data collection and analysis on elder abuse and people who perpetrate elder abuse can build a more accurate understanding of the nature of elder abuse, the characteristics and motivations for perpetration, and how to prevent and respond to incidents of elder abuse.   **165**

RECOMMENDATION 41: The Victorian Government:

- develop a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework tool specifically for elder abuse

- enhance the capacity of workers across the service system (such as at The Orange Doors, financial counselling services and in health and aged care) to better identify and collect data on elder abuse, including financial and emotional abuse, risk factors, intersectionality and long-term outcomes.   **165**

RECOMMENDATION 42: The Victorian Government develop specific outcomes in relation to elder abuse in the Family Violence Outcomes Framework, including under *Domain 3: Perpetrators are held accountable, connected and take responsibility for stopping their violence* and *Domain 4: Preventing and responding to family violence is systemic and enduring.*   **165**

FINDING 56: Better capturing and contextualising data on children and young people who experience and use family violence would help inform their support needs, guide service planning and staff training needs, develop programs, inform early intervention initiatives and prevent future risk of children and young people using violence. This will also increase understanding about the characteristics, volume and patterns of young people who use family violence.   **169**

FINDING 57: Current criminal and systems responses that use the age of 18 to distinguish between children and adults are inconsistent with clinical understandings of young people's cognitive development until the age of 25, leading to inconsistent data collection and service provision as a young person ages. The Victorian Government can continuously improve how data and data capture and sharing mechanisms can provide meaningful insight into children and young people's use of family violence. This includes adopting a nuanced understanding of children and young people that distinguishes between ages 0–12, 12–18 and 18–24.   **172**

RECOMMENDATION 43: The Victorian Government collaborate with specialist family violence service providers and Victoria Police to review how data about children and young people who experience and use family violence is captured, used and understood. A related data collection, storage, linkage and reporting framework should be developed to:

- apply an age and development lens

- recognise experiences, intersectionality, capacity for change and the impacts of labels

- explore options to improve the L17 referral process to The Orange Doors to more easily identify young people. **172**

FINDING 58: The Orange Door Network and the new child and young person Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework tool present opportunities to:

- collect more family violence-related data and information about children and young people experiencing and using family violence

- share that data and information more proactively with service providers working with children and young people. **174**

RECOMMENDATION 44: The Victorian Government:

- monitor, review and report back to the family violence sector on the impact of the child and young person Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework tool within six months of the tool being released

- increase information sharing between The Orange Door Network and youth-specific service providers to enhance the delivery of informed and nuanced support. **174**

FINDING 59: While early intervention and diversion from the justice system is key (where appropriate through therapeutic and multifaceted support), justice responses to children and young people's use of family violence (including by Victoria Police and courts) should apply an age and developmental lens. It should also recognise experiences, intersectionality, capacity for change and the impacts of labels to maximise children and young people's chances of receiving appropriate support to change behaviour. **175**

FINDING 60: Further research and analysis would assist the Victorian Government to better understand the nuances, contexts and scope of children and young people's use of family violence. Collecting additional data in relation to children and young people could help inform supports and early intervention, including through hospitals, emergency departments, mental health services, schools and maternal and child health services, and from qualitative and quantitative research and outcomes data. **179**

RECOMMENDATION 45: The Victorian Government support service providers, including schools and education providers, to better capture and analyse data on children and young people to prioritise early intervention, while applying an age and developmental lens, and recognising experiences, intersectionality, capacity for change and the impact of labels.   **179**

FINDING 61: There are many opportunities to build a better understanding of people who use family violence through more research on what programs and interventions work for diverse people who use family violence at different times and life stages, and increased visibility of how people access and use programs and how behaviours change over time.   **181**

FINDING 62: Increasing consistent, long-term, more nuanced and centrally recorded evaluation and data capture from interventions and programs for people who use family violence, beyond basic reporting and funding requirements, will broaden the evidence and knowledge base on what works. It will also help integrate learnings into practice and support the development of innovative ways of working with people who use family violence.   **184**

FINDING 63: There are opportunities to scale up the availability, breadth and range of programs (including promising pilots) and interventions for people who use family violence. With greater program availability and more data collection, a better understanding of what programs and interventions work best for people from diverse cohorts at different life stages and contexts can be developed.   **186**

RECOMMENDATION 46: The Victorian Government implement and publicly report on actions taken in response to the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's suggested actions in the report *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms–Service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family* (2023) by June 2026, including:

• creating a centralised platform or database to monitor perpetrator intervention waitlists and participant completions

• scaling up promising pilot interventions to meet demand (including therapeutic interventions)

• updating the Men's Behaviour Change Minimum Standards to reflect a broader range of programs and best practices.   **186**

FINDING 64: An integrated, consistent and strategic outcomes and evaluation framework on programs and interventions for people who use family violence would support the collection of consistent and longitudinal data, create more opportunities to triangulate data, build knowledge over time and improve the quality and impact of services and interventions when learnings are integrated into practice. In line with Finding 5, it is important that the Victorian Government apply Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles when developing this framework, to ensure First Nations communities have control over their data and how it is used.   **189**

RECOMMENDATION 47: The Victorian Government consult with the family violence sector to implement an integrated, consistent and strategic outcomes and evaluation framework for programs and interventions for a diverse range of people who use family violence that includes longitudinal and qualitative data from a variety of sources (including victim survivors). This framework should be aligned with the Family Violence Outcomes Framework, service delivery reporting requirements, federal frameworks on perpetrator interventions, Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles and enhanced information sharing where appropriate.   **189**

Part 4 | How to improve our understanding

FINDING 65: A contemporary and deeper evidence base on people using family violence and perpetration can be built through a multi-method approach to data collection, research and analysis. This includes administrative data, evaluation and monitoring data, qualitative data, longitudinal data, studies and research projects and linked data, from a variety of sources, including people using/who have used family violence, victim survivors, families and practitioners working with people who use family violence and victim survivors.   **210**

RECOMMENDATION 48: The Victorian Government support the capture, extraction and use of administrative and qualitative data collected during service provision for research and analysis (including Men's Referral Service phoneline data, and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework and case file data), to inform evidence-based policy, a fuller picture of people using family violence, profiles and risk, and measuring the effectiveness of interventions.   **210**

RECOMMENDATION 49: The Victorian Government invest in, and support:

• data collection and program evaluation to adequately capture experiences and impacts of services on people using family violence

• the use of this data to inform research and provide insight into family violence incidents, experiences, drivers, responses, impacts and outcomes to shape effective policies and improve systems.   **211**

RECOMMENDATION 50: The Victorian Government support new studies and research projects into people who use family violence, which centres practice-based knowledge and qualitative, longitudinal and multi-method approaches. Priority should particularly be given to people who use family violence who are not in contact with services. **211**

RECOMMENDATION 51: The Victorian Government undertake a longitudinal research study to track people from different backgrounds and with varying levels of system contact to build a better understanding of family violence trajectories, protective factors, behaviour change over time, pathways in and out of perpetration, long-term impacts of behaviour interventions, attitudes, offending contexts and what increases or reduces risks of adverse outcomes. **211**

RECOMMENDATION 52: The Victorian Government promote and improve availability of linked family violence data in the Victorian Social Investment Integrated Data Resource for external research access, and once both The Orange Door and Tools for Risk Assessment and Management datasets are included, undertake a data linkage project to:

- better understand the journeys of people using family violence, including their systems interactions, and health and social intersections

- evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of interventions and programs. **211**

FINDING 66: A population-based survey of people who use family violence is an opportunity to collect data and provide evidence to improve understanding of the profile, drivers, behaviours and pathways of people who use family violence. This could help inform evidence-based policies to prevent, mitigate and respond to family violence. Question design and participant anonymity are important to consider when conducting this type of survey. **214**

RECOMMENDATION 53: The Victorian Government advocate at a federal level for a national population-based survey of people who use family violence that provides for state and regional-level data to shape evidence-based policies on preventing and responding to family violence at these different levels. **214**

RECOMMENDATION 54: In the absence of a national population-based survey, the Victorian Government pilot a state-level population-based survey aimed at people who use violence. This should incorporate learnings from the New South Wales pilot survey about what methodology would yield the most reliable and measurable data. **214**

FINDING 67: Using complex data for research to meaningfully drive change in family violence reform and prevention requires skill and expertise, particularly to ensure it is critically analysed and considers nuance and context. Through training, awareness and knowledge, data can be collected from or about, or research co-produced with, people using/who have used family violence to better understand the nuance or contexts of offending and profiles. **217**

RECOMMENDATION 55: The Victorian Government, in implementing Recommendation 2, provide guidance to researchers and service providers on how and when to ethically, consistently and safely undertake research on perpetration and with people using/who have used family violence. **217**

FINDING 68: Increasing access to publicly available, disaggregated, de-identified and place-based family violence data in a dynamic format, as well as making existing datasets and resources more accessible, helps researchers, peak bodies, sectors and service providers to better understand people who use family violence. As a result, this supports:

- the development of targeted programs and interventions to address service delivery gaps

- understanding of the experiences/needs of diverse cohorts, and emerging trends, outcomes and improvement areas related to people using family violence. **221**

RECOMMENDATION 56: The Victorian Government, in implementing Recommendation 1 to undertake a data mapping project, identify and make publicly available, where possible, administrative and linked datasets on family violence. **221**

RECOMMENDATION 57: The Victorian Government support peak bodies, sectors and service providers who work with people using family violence and Family Violence Regional Integration Committees to:

- access family violence data and analysis

- promote research partnerships and collaboration between these bodies, government agencies, The Orange Door Network, researchers and research institutes. **221**

RECOMMENDATION 58: The Victorian Government support State departments and agencies holding data on people using family violence to prepare existing data for research and analysis and enable relevant service providers to contribute their data to social service datasets. **221**

FINDING 69: The Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) is well placed to use different incident and system-based justice data sources for research and analysis. Increasing CSA's access to, and linkage between datasets held about people who use family violence data with more granularity (for example, from alcohol and drug and mental health services, family court, family violence helplines and community legal services), would provide a richer picture to better understand perpetration pathways, and connections and overlaps in service provision. **223**

RECOMMENDATION 59: The Victorian Government increase the Crime Statistics Agency's (CSA) resources and capacity to undertake research and analysis projects about people using family violence, and support CSA's work to acquire additional family violence data sources and link social service data with more granularity to provide a richer picture of family violence perpetration pathways, connections and service use. **223**

FINDING 70: Increasing the Coroners Court of Victoria's ability to collate and analyse family violence-related data would improve understanding of family violence prevalence, journeys, drivers, trends and patterns, risk and contributing factors to lethality, opportunities to intervene at different service touch points, hold people accountable and keep them in view, and the relationship between suicide and family violence. This could help contribute to the development and review of family violence related policy, interventions, programs and frameworks. **224**

RECOMMENDATION 60: The Victorian Government support the Coroners Court of Victoria to better investigate and analyse the circumstances of all family violence-related deaths to build a more complete picture of the patterns of family violence perpetration and the context in which family violence related deaths occur (including the link between suicide and family violence) and code, analyse and disseminate associated data to relevant stakeholders for research. **225**

FINDING 71: Research on people using family violence should build on what is already known and inform future government planning and policy through a systematic, strategic, integrated and long-term approach. The knowledge developed by advancing research and data collection must be integrated into practice. This will help shift the focus onto people who use family violence and their behaviour change over the long term through effective service provision. It will also help keep victim survivors safe. **227**

RECOMMENDATION 61: The Victorian Government report on the Family Violence Research Agenda 2021–2024 outlining what research questions have been addressed and what gaps remain, and then produce a research strategy or plan (aligned with the Victorian Government's overarching family violence strategies, frameworks and plans) that identifies research priorities to increase understanding of people using family violence. This should include a focus on efforts to improve data collection, linkage and integration of research into practice, and articulate how current and planned research will be considered cohesively to build on existing evidence and identify future research pathways.   **227**

Abbreviations and key terms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACCHO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
ACCO	Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation
ANROWS	Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety
AOD	Alcohol and other drug(s)
CIP	Central Information Point
	CIP consolidates information about a perpetrator of family violence into a single report.
	CIP reports are used to: assess and manage the risk of a person who uses family violence; help services keep the person in view and hold them accountable; and keep people safe.
	CIP brings together workers and information from Court Services Victoria, Victoria Police, Corrections Victoria and DFFH.
CISS	Child Information Sharing Scheme
	CISS enables authorised organisations and services to share information to promote the wellbeing or safety of children.
CLC	Community legal centre(s)
CMS	Case/client management system
Core services	Core support or intervention organisations and practitioners, including courts, legal services, Corrections Victoria, Victoria Police, family dispute resolution services, child protection, with responsibility for responding to victim survivors or perpetrators of/people using family violence.
CRIS CRISSP	Client Relationship Information System (CRIS) and Client Relationship Information System for Service Providers (CRISSP) is the client information and case management system designed to improve services and facilitate the provision of coordinated care.
	This system seeks to support and facilitate the use of data by DFFH and the community services sector to satisfy statutory and contractual responsibilities.
	Where a service specifically provides contracted case management services to the department in relation to child protection and/or youth justice, the service will also use CRIS. Services and their employees are authorised by the Department to access CRIS and must comply with the e-Business Access Agreement.
CRM	Customer/client relationship management
CSA	Crime Statistics Agency
CVDL	Centre for Victorian Data Linkage
	Victoria's specialist data linkage agency providing data linkage and provisioning services to researchers and other Victorian Government departments.
	CVDL maintains the Victorian Linkage Map and Integrated Data Resource.
DEX	Data Exchange—Australian Department of Social Services
DFFH	Department of Families, Fairness and Housing
DFSV	Domestic, family and sexual violence
DH	Department of Health
DJCS	Department of Justice and Community Safety

ED	Emergency department
EIIF	Early Intervention Investment Framework
	EIIF helps guide early interventions to improve the lives of Victorians and deliver better outcomes across the service system. It aims to link funding to quantifiable impacts both for people using the services as well as the service system and guide investments to where timely assistance for Victorians will improve life outcomes for individuals and reduce pressure on acute services.
FSV	Family Safety Victoria
	FSV was created on 1 July 2017 to drive key elements of *Free from violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence* and coordinate support for families to help them care for children and young people. FSV is a division of DFFH.
FVDB	Family Violence Dashboard
FVDCF	Family Violence Data Collection Framework
	A guideline for the collection of family violence related data by Victorian government departments, agencies and service providers.
FVIO	Family violence intervention order(s)
	A court order to protect a person, their children and their property from a family member, partner or ex-partner.
FVISS	Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme
	FVISS enables authorised organisations and services to share information to facilitate assessment and management of family violence risk to children and adults.
FVOF	Family Violence Outcomes Framework
	FVOF translates Victoria's vision to end family violence, outlined in the 10-Year Plan, into a set of outcomes, indicators and measures. The four FVOF domains reflect the long-term outcomes to be achieved through the reform:
	• Domain 1: Family violence and gender inequality are not tolerated.
	• Domain 2: Victim survivors, vulnerable children and families, are safe and supported to recover and thrive.
	• Domain 3: Perpetrators are held accountable, connected and take responsibility for stopping their violence.
	• Domain 4: Preventing and responding to family violence is systemic and enduring.
FVOF Implementation Strategy	Family Violence Outcomes Framework Measurement and Monitoring Implementation Strategy
	Outlines the whole of government staged approach towards outcomes reporting and outlines the planned annual reporting approach.
FVP Act	*Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic)
	The purpose of this Act is to:
	• maximise safety for children and adults who have experienced family violence
	• prevent and reduce family violence to the greatest extent possible
	• promote the accountability of perpetrators of family violence for their actions.
FVRIC	Family Violence Regional Integration Committee(s)
	Located in all metropolitan and regional parts of Victoria, FVRICs bring together local representatives from the family violence prevention, early intervention and response system to drive greater integration of regional family violence responses.
FVRIM	Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor
	FVRIM was responsible for holding government and its agencies to account for implementing family violence reform following the Royal Commission into Family Violence.
GP	General practitioner

HDC	Homelessness Data Collection	
	HDC captures case and client information collected from agencies funded by the Victorian and Australian Governments to provide specialist homelessness and specialist family violence services. To comply with Commonwealth funding requirements, these agencies report the same data to the Specialist Homelessness Services Collection (SHSC), a national collection managed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). The data framework for the HDC must align to the SHSC and any changes require the approval of AIHW.	
	HDC includes some Victorian-specific data items not included in the SHSC (such as data taken from Victorian specific profiles and assessment tools) and these were approved by AIHW on the proviso their inclusion did not affect the integrity of the SHSC.	
HPPs	Health privacy principles	
	Established by the *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic), HPPs apply to health information collected and handled in Victoria by the Victorian public sector and the private sector. The *Health Records Act* creates a framework to protect the privacy of individuals' health information and regulates the collection/handling of health information.	
ICCMS	Integrated Client and Case Management Systems	
	Collection of IT systems for Child Protection, including CRIS, CRISSP and front-end reception information.	
IGA	Intergovernmental Agreement on data sharing	
	The Intergovernmental Agreement on data sharing commits all jurisdictions to share public sector data as a default position, where it can be done securely, safely, lawfully and ethically.	
	The agreement recognises data as a shared national asset and aims to maximise the value of data to deliver outstanding policies and services for Australians.	
	The agreement was signed by National Cabinet and came into effect on 9 July 2021.	
Intersectionality	Intersectionality describes how systems and structures interact on multiple levels to oppress and create barriers, with overlapping forms of discrimination, stigma and power imbalances. It is based on characteristics such as Aboriginality, gender, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ethnicity, colour, nationality, refugee or asylum seeker background, migration or visa status, language, religion, ability, age, mental health, socioeconomic status, housing status, geographic location, medical record or criminal record. This compounds the risk of experiencing family violence and creates additional barriers for a person to access the help they need.	
IPPs	Information privacy principles	
	The 10 IPPs are the core of privacy law in Victoria. They set out the minimum standard for how the Victorian public sector should manage personal information.	
IRIS	Integrated Report and Information System	
	IRIS is a data collection system used by organisations funded by DFFH to deliver certain services. The data collected includes information on the cases presented to agencies, demographic information of clients and issues those clients present with.	
	Records are recorded and stored locally within an agency, and de-identified information is extracted to DFFH monthly.	
	IRIS is used across a wide range of program areas including Family Services, Early Parenting Centres, Family Violence Services and Sexual Assault Support Services.	
ISE	Information Sharing Entity	
	An ISE is an organisation or service that has been prescribed in regulations to request and share information under CISS and FVISS.	
IT	Information technology	
L17	An L17 form refers to the Victoria Police Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Report that Victoria Police are required to complete after they have attended a family incident. The report is completed when family incidents, interfamilial-related sexual offences, and child abuse are reported to police.	

LEAP	Law Enforcement Assistance Program
LGBTIQA+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, asexual and other sexually or gender diverse people
LIV	Law Institute of Victoria
Mainstream services	Mainstream and non-family violence specific organisations and practitioners, including health, housing, AOD, mental health, youth, disability, First Nations, LGBTIQA+ or culturally and linguistically diverse services, with responsibility for responding to victim survivors or perpetrators of family violence.
MARAM Framework	Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework
	The MARAM Framework sets out the responsibilities of different workforces in identifying, assessing and managing family violence risk across the family violence and broader service system.
MBCP	Men's behaviour change program
	MBCPs are designed for men who have used violence, coercion or control in their relationships with their partner or former partners, children or other family members. MBCPs aim to encourage men to take responsibility for their behaviour and provide them with the skills and tools necessary to change their behaviour and maintain respectful relationships.
	An MBCP is typically delivered by trained facilitators, usually in a group setting, and usually between 17–20 weeks. The program uses a range of approaches including group discussions, activities and psychoeducation to support participants to develop an understanding of the impact of their behaviour on victim survivors, family members, and their community.
MCV	Magistrates' Court of Victoria
NARI	National Ageing Research Institute
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
NSW	New South Wales
OCCAAARS	Ownership, Control, Custodianship, Access, Accountable to First Nations, Amplify Community Voices, Relevant & Reciprocal, Sustainably self-determining
	Framework developed to support grassroots organisations, programs and peoples define elements and principles of Indigenous data sovereignty and governance
OVIC	Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner
PSO	Protective Services Officer
RAE	Risk Assessment Entity
	A subset of ISEs with additional sharing abilities for a family violence assessment purpose under FVISS.
RAMP	Risk Assessment and Management Panel(s)
	RAMPs are a formally convened meeting of key local agencies and organisations who conduct a multi-agency risk assessment of people who are at high risk of serious harm from family violence.
	RAMPs focus on the perpetrator while simultaneously centralising the safety of victim survivors, mostly women and their children. RAMPs are engaged when the usual service system has not or cannot mitigate serious risk posed by the perpetrator due to systemic and structural barriers and/or intensifying, overt, calculating and immutable perpetrator behaviour.
	There are 18 RAMPs across Victoria.
Recidivism	Recidivism is generally used for describing repetitious criminal activity. For example, repeat offending of family violence.

RISS	RAMP Information Sharing System
	A web-based information sharing and record management application to support RAMPs and facilitate meetings by enabling RAMP coordinators and members to process referrals, see history of RAMP involvement for perpetrators, affected family members and their children, conduct live multi-agency risk assessments and assign risk management actions during meetings, and provide updates to track impact between meetings.
RMF	Resource Management Framework
	A governance and operational framework covering public sector planning, budgeting, service delivery, accountability and review. It outlines mandatory requirements as well as guidance for departments, including reporting requirements for programs for people using family violence.
SAM/SDT	Service Agreement Module/Service Delivery Tracking
	SDT supports organisations in managing their progress towards meeting agreed targets and assists DFFH to manage its reporting commitments. Organisations access and complete the service delivery tracking acquittal form in the SAM.
SASVic	Sexual Assault Services Victoria
SFVA	Specialist Family Violence Advisor(s)
	In response to recommendations of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, the Victorian Government funded the establishment of SFVA positions across 17 areas in 2017. The ongoing positions are auspiced by mental health and alcohol and other drug service providers. SFVAs embed family violence expertise within the alcohol and other drug and mental health sectors, support continuous improvement, lead system and practice change, and build sector capacity and capability to identify, assess, and respond to family violence.
SHIP	Specialist Homelessness Information Platform
	Most specialist family violence services use the SHIP to facilitate the recording and reporting of information for the HDC and SHSC.
	SHIP is managed and hosted by Infoxchange, a not-for-profit information technology provider. Other systems used by specialist family violence services include the Service Records System (SRS, which is also hosted by Infoxchange), CSnet (Computer Science Network) and SAMIS (Strategic Asset Management Information System).
	Specialist family violence services included in the HDC are: Family violence victim survivor case management services, Family violence refuge services, Safe Steps services (HDC records case data not helpline telephony data), and a small number of family violence men's (perpetrator) services.
SHRFV	Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence
	In response to a recommendation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, the Victorian Government committed $38.4 million to support the development and implementation of the SHRFV initiative for five years from 2016–17.
	The Royal Women's Hospital and Bendigo Health were sector leads (metro and rural/regional) to support health services. Twenty-seven health services were funded to implement the initiative and provide mentoring and support to the remaining 62 public health services in a regional hub-and-spoke style model. The funding supported the employment of project workers and staff trainers, and has increased access to internal secondary consultation services, such as social workers, for patients who disclose family violence.
Specialist services	Specialist family violence and sexual assault organisations and practitioners, including The Orange Door, sexual assault centres, perpetrator intervention services, and specialist family violence services for First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse or disability communities.

TOD	The Orange Door/The Orange Door Network TODs aim to provide quick and simple access to support for: • adults, children and young people who are experiencing family violence • families who need support with the care and wellbeing of children and young people • perpetrators of family violence. • It brings services together as a partnership so that individuals and families do not have to go to multiple services. Services available at TODs include: • risk and needs assessment • safety planning • crisis support. TODs can connect people to a range of services that provide ongoing safety and wellbeing supports.
TOD CRM	TOD Client Relationship Management TOD CRM is a purpose-built system that supports practitioners to capture, store and record information relating to TOD clients. It provides an essential interface to assist in operations such as information sharing and recording decisions made across the spectrum of services provided by TOD. The CRM is an enabler for TOD as the secure storage of information, and recording such information as inbound referrals, assessments, safety plans, service planning, and outbound referrals. It provides access to the CIP platform, where CIP requesters can make requests and receive CIP reports, and the TRAM platform, where practitioners can undertake a family violence risk assessment.
TRAM	Tools for Risk Assessment and Management TRAM is an online data system that provides access to MARAM tools for use by practitioners to conduct risk assessments and develop safety plans. TRAM is used by practitioners in TOD for risk assessment, and a select number of specialist family violence agencies for risk assessment and safety planning.
Universal services	Universal organisations and practitioners including workplaces, education services, early childhood services, faith-based institutions, with responsibility for responding to victim survivors or perpetrators of family violence.
VAADA	Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association
VACCHO	Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation
VADC	Victorian Alcohol and Drug Collection VADC is the data collection specification for all of Victorian funded AOD treatment providers. VADC is a list of data elements (or types of information) that AOD treatment providers are required to report from their own client management systems to the DH.
VAGO	Victorian Auditor-General's Office
VLA	Victoria Legal Aid
VLRC	Victorian Law Reform Commission
Workforce tiers	Tier 1 is specialist family violence and sexual assault practitioners, Tier 2 is workers in core support or intervention agencies, Tier 3 is workers in mainstream and non-family violence specific support agencies, and Tier 4 is workers in universal services and organisations.
YSAS	Youth Support and Advocacy Service

Background
Why we need to know more about people using family violence

Why this Inquiry is important

Many government departments, agencies and services engage with people experiencing or using family violence. These include the civil and criminal justice systems, police and first responders, child protection, family and community services, general practitioners, and hospitals, schools and other education providers.[1] Data they collect on people who use family violence supports risk assessment and management, as well as policy development, service planning, research and evaluation activities.

The Victorian Government's implementation of recommendations from the 2015 Royal Commission into Family Violence have improved the way data on people using family violence is collected, linked and shared[2]—supporting a cultural shift towards sharing information to promote victim survivor safety and keep perpetrators in view.[3] But even with these 'nation-leading' changes,[4] the Victorian Government is not gaining the insights needed to achieve a full understanding of the cohort of people using family violence.[5]

This Inquiry considers how the Victorian Government can continue to improve data collection and analysis to enable a more holistic understanding of people using family violence. Building this data capability is important because it strengthens the evidence base on the drivers of family violence, pathways to perpetration and what leads people using family violence to take responsibility for changing their behaviours. Collecting more nuanced data about people using family violence will help improve the ability to provide more tailored responses and enhance safety for victim survivors, whose experiences of family violence and its impacts remain at the centre of efforts to increase understanding of people using family violence.

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1   Victorian Government, *Perpetrators and people who use violence*, 19 April 2021, <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-reform-rolling-action-plan-2020-2023/priorities-for-2020-2023/perpetrators-and-people> accessed 3 May 2024. See Web of accountability.

2   Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, received 14 June 2024, p. 3; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, received 31 May 2024, p. 5.

3   Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms—Service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family*, 2023, p. 13.

4   Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, received 19 July 2024, p. 15; Elena Campbell, Associate Director, Research, Advocacy and Policy, Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 2.

5   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Ending family violence: annual report 2022*, 2023, p. 46.

Interpretation of the terms of reference

The Inquiry's terms of reference required the Committee to consider 'the mechanisms for capturing data on the profile and volume of perpetrators of family violence in Victoria and barriers to achieving a full understanding of this cohort.'[6]

In undertaking the Inquiry, the Committee focused on how the Victorian Government can achieve a more holistic understanding of people using family violence. This included considering improvements to current data collection, linkage and sharing and what else is needed to build knowledge about the perpetration of family violence.

Inquiry process

1 Inquiry referred to the Committee on 21 March 2024

2 Submissions called by 31 May 2024

3 72 submissions and 7 additional documents received

4 7 days of public hearings

5 Further research and report drafting

6 Report tabled in April 2025

7 Government response due within 6 months

Source: Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria, n.d., <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/fvpdata> accessed 20 December 2024.

Evidence to the Inquiry covered a broad range of issues on a subject of significant public concern. While at times evidence received by the Committee fell outside of the terms of reference, the Committee considered that the Inquiry process provided an important forum for these views to be raised.

Note on language and terminology

Family violence refers to:

• physical, sexual, emotional, psychological and economic abuse, as well as coercion and control

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6   Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee, *Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria*, n.d., <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/fvpdata> accessed 20 December 2024. The reporting date was extended from 26 November 2024 to 31 March 2025 by resolution of the Legislative Assembly on 1 August 2024.

- domination that causes the family member to feel fear for the safety (or wellbeing) of themselves, or another person

- the exposure of these behaviours (or the effects) upon a child.[7]

There are many relationships in which family violence can occur, including:

- between current or former spouses or domestic/adult intimate partners

- in other intimate personal relationships, such as youth intimate partner/dating violence, parent to child or child to parent, relationships with elders, siblings and other relatives, and between extended families/kinship networks and in family-like or carer relationships.[8]

First Nations communities define family violence to include a range of physical, emotional, sexual, social, spiritual, cultural, psychological and economic abuses that occur within families, intimate relationships, extended families, kinship networks and communities.[9]

Victim survivor refers to adults, young people, adolescents and children who have experienced family violence.

In this report, **people who use family violence** or **person using family violence** refers to people who use any form of violence against others in a family or domestic setting. This language is used instead of perpetrator in line with what is used in the sector. The term perpetrator can stigmatise, make people feel judged or hostile, and de-emphasise personal agency for change or limit capacity to understand a person's situation comprehensively and holistically.[10] In some instances, the Committee has chosen to use the term **perpetrator** or **perpetrators** to refer to people who have been convicted of a criminal family violence offence or if the relevant source has used this term. The Committee acknowledges that 'perpetrator' can be the preferred term for victim survivors as 'it is validating and enhances accountability'.[11]

In this report, when the Committee refers to **keeping people using family violence 'in view'**, it means the process of consistently and actively identifying, monitoring and managing their behaviour and risk over time across the service system. For example,

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[7] Victorian Government, *About family violence*, 21 July 2021, <https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-foundation-knowledge-guide/about-family-violence> accessed 3 May 2024; *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic).

[8] Victorian Government, *About family violence*; Lucia E. Klencakova, Maria Pentaraki and Cathal McManus, *The Impact of Intimate Partner Violence on Young Women's Educational Well-Being: A Systematic Review of Literature*, Trauma, Violence & Abuse 2023, Vol. 24(2) 1172–1187.

[9] Victorian Government, *Family Violence MARAM definitions*, 2 March 2021, <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-multi-agency-risk-assessment-and-management-framework/definitions> accessed 20 December 2024; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, received 31 May 2024, p. 8.

[10] Victorian Government, *Language in this report: The Orange Door Annual Service Delivery Report 2022–23*, 1 May 2024, <https://www.vic.gov.au/orange-door-annual-service-delivery-report-2022-23/language-report> accessed 10 May 2024; YSAS, *Submission 9*, received 28 May 2024, p. 24; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 3; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, received 31 May 2024, p. 1; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, received 14 June 2024, p. 6; Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, received 12 September 2024, p. 3; Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, *Submission 22*, received 30 May 2024, p. 2.

[11] Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 1.

a victim survivor support service monitoring the course of a perpetrator through an intervention response and collaborating with other stakeholders to ensure ongoing risk assessment.[12]

Children and young people using family violence is used to refer to children aged 10 to 17 and young people aged 18 to 24 who use any form of family violence against others.[13]

Abbreviations and key terms used in this report are defined in a list in the preliminary pages of this report.

Data on people who use family violence in Victoria

Family Safety Victoria (FSV) is a division of the Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH). FSV has played a key role in implementing recommendations made by the 2015 Royal Commission into Family Violence to improve family violence data systems and information sharing.[14] The Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor (FVRIM) was also a key driver of efforts to improve family violence data collection and sharing.[15]

The following information sharing schemes, services and frameworks collect and share information to identify, assess and manage family violence risk to victim survivors in Victoria, and help to keep people who use family violence in view.[16] In the process, these schemes, services and frameworks collect some data on people who use family violence and help monitor and manage risk to victim survivors.

Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) authorises prescribed organisations and services[17] to share risk-relevant information to facilitate identification, assessment and management of family violence risk involving children, young people and adults.[18]

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12   Ella Mackay, Manager Family Safety and Child Wellbeing, Cafs Ballarat, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31.

13   Victorian Government, *Victorian Family Violence Research Agenda 2021–2024: Adolescent family violence*, 21 February 2022, <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-family-violence-research-agenda-2021-2024/research-priorities/adolescent-family-violence> accessed 20 December 2024.

14   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, received 17 July 2024, p. 1.

15   Ibid., p. 13.

16   Ibid., p. 1. See also Appendix A that includes two tables mapping the purpose of data collection and related frameworks that apply across relevant stakeholders for capturing data on persons using family violence in Victoria.

17   These are called Information Sharing Entities (ISEs), for example, schools, out-of-home care and health services; and Risk Assessment Entities (RAEs), for example, specialist family violence services, Victoria Police and Child Protection. ISEs are prescribed under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme as specified by the Family Violence Protection (Information Sharing and Risk Management) Regulations 2018; and the Child Information Sharing Scheme as specified by the Child Wellbeing and Safety (Information Sharing) Regulations 2018, see the ISE list (a searchable database) here Victorian Government, *Information sharing scheme entity list search*, 20 February 2024, <https://www.vic.gov.au/ise-list-search> accessed 8 April 2024.

18   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 1.

Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) authorises prescribed organisations to share information to promote the wellbeing and safety of children.[19]

Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) guides responses from prescribed organisations that have responsibilities in identifying, assessing and managing family violence risk. It provides principles and responsibilities that prescribed organisations are required to align with, by incorporating these in their policies, procedures, practice guidance and tools. MARAM includes practice guidance and tools for working with people who use family violence across the service system.[20]

Central Information Point (CIP) is an information sharing service that brings together risk relevant information about a person using, or alleged to be using, family violence that is held by government systems and databases into a single report.[21] CIP consolidated reports provide critical information about a person using family violence's history and pattern of behaviour. Frontline practitioners use CIP reports to support family violence risk assessment and management.[22]

The Orange Door (TOD) is a statewide assessment and brief intervention service for children, young people and adults who are experiencing or using family violence, and for families who need support for the care and wellbeing of children and young people.[23] TODs receive referrals directly from Victoria Police and professionals, as well as self-referrals from individuals. TOD's role is to connect people with the appropriate programs and interventions.[24] DFFH, FSV is responsible for operating TODs and provided evidence on their behalf as part of this Inquiry.[25]

The below frameworks guide the collection of family violence-related administrative data by Victorian Government departments, agencies and service providers to analyse outcomes and support research and understanding. In the process, they collect data relevant to people who use family violence.

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19 Department of Health, *Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework and information sharing*, 4 October 2024, <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/health-workforce/family-violence-multi-agency-risk-assessment-and-management-framework> accessed 17 January 2025.

20 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 1. Form L17 operationalises MARAM for Victoria Police. See Victoria Police, *Information for external stakeholders: the new Family Violence Report (L17)*, Fact sheet, 29 March 2019.

21 The CIP is established under Division 6 of Part 5A of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic). FSV and CIP data custodians (Child Protection, Court Services Victoria, Victoria Police and Corrections Victoria) work together to provide the service. Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Chapter 4: Effectiveness of the Central Information Point in achieving its objectives*, 18 August 2023, <https://www.fvrim.vic.gov.au/legislative-review-family-violence-information-sharing-and-risk-management/effectiveness-central> accessed 20 May 2024.

22 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 1. TODs, RAMPs, the Men's Referral Service (at No to Violence) and Safe Steps can request CIP reports. See Section 2, Part 2.3.5 about expanding and improving CIP for more information.

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid., p. 5.

25 Amber Griffiths, Executive Director, Family and Sexual Violence Programs, Family Safety Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 58.

Family Violence Data Collection Framework (FVDCF) is a non-mandatory administrative data collection tool to help government and non-government service providers and agencies who collect data in the context of family violence.[26] For example, perpetrator intervention services and crisis family violence and sexual assault telephone/online services.[27] The FVDCF aims to help service providers 'standardise the collection of administrative information' to improve data collection practices and advance 'the existing evidence base concerning family violence in Victoria'.[28]

Family Violence Outcomes Framework (FVOF) sets outcomes, indicators and measures designed to achieve Victoria's long-term objectives to end family violence. This includes collection of data to report against performance measures that are directly relevant to this Inquiry under *Domain 3: Perpetrators are held accountable, connected and take responsibility for stopping their violence* and *Domain 4: Preventing and responding to family violence is systemic and enduring*.[29]

Resource Management Framework (RMF) requires government departments to report against performance measures and targets to monitor service delivery. This includes programs for people who use family violence, for example, the number of men participating in a men's behaviour change program (MBCP).[30]

Government and non-government organisations capture some data about people who use family violence to support the above schemes, frameworks and services using several different systems.[31] Below are some key data systems.

Integrated Reports and Information System (IRIS) is a data collection system used by organisations funded by DFFH to deliver services, including Family Services, Early Parenting Centres, Family Violence Services and Sexual Assault Support Services. IRIS includes information on the cases presented to agencies and client demographics and presenting issues.[32]

Specialist Homelessness Information Platform (SHIP) is a data system used by some specialist family violence and homelessness services to collect information, including client demographics. SHIP is managed by the Australian Institute of Health and

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26 Victorian Government, *Introduction: What is the framework?*, 8 January 2020, <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-family-violence-data-collection-framework/introduction#what-is-the-framework> accessed 8 April 2024; Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Report of the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor as at 1 November 2019*, 2020, p. 51.

27 Victorian Government, *Introduction: What is the framework?*

28 Victorian Government, *Introduction: What is the framework?*. See Part 2 , Sections 2.1.3 and 2.2.1 for further discussion about the FVDCF.

29 Victorian Government, *Ending family violence: annual report 2022: Family Violence Outcomes Framework*, 2023, <https://www.vic.gov.au/ending-family-violence-annual-report-2022/family-violence-outcomes-framework> accessed 20 December 2024. See Part 1, Section 1.5 and Part 3, *Learning what works: programs for people using family violence* for further discussion on Domains 3 and 4.

30 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 6.

31 For a full list of relevant data sources, see ibid., pp. 10–12, 17–20.

32 Family Safety Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, correspondence, 27 November 2024.

Welfare and MARAM risk assessment tools have been built into it, but SHIP is not compulsory for services to use, and some agencies use their own 'third party' system instead.[33]

The Orange Door Client Relationship Management (TOD CRM) is the primary record keeping system for TODs. It records client and case information including assessments, service plans and referrals as well as demographic and other service delivery-related information.[34]

Tools for Risk Assessment and Management (TRAM) is an online data system that enables practitioners to access MARAM tools to conduct risk assessments and develop safety plans. It contains data on identified persons using family violence, including demographics, risk factors and risk levels.[35] TRAM is used by TOD practitioners for risk assessment, and a select number of specialist family violence agencies for risk assessment and safety planning.[36]

The following Victorian family violence data resources are publicly available and include de-identified data about people who use family violence.

Family Violence Dashboard (FVDB) produced by the Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) includes interactive family violence data visualisations, detailed family violence data tables by source and key statistics on family violence in local government areas.[37]

Prevention of Family Violence Data Platform produced by Respect Victoria in partnership with CSA is 'a comprehensive data repository, tracking trends related to the prevention and prevalence of family violence and all forms of violence against women in Victoria'. It is interactive and family violence data can be searched by outcome or by theme and includes data about 'perpetrators'.[38]

Data is also collected by service providers and researchers. For example, as a by-product of service delivery, providers may collect program evaluation data about new or existing initiatives for people using family violence that support improvement

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33   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, pp. 9, 11; Crime Statistics Agency, *Explanatory notes—Specialist Homelessness Services*, n.d., <https://files.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/2023-11/Explanatory%20Notes%20and%20Definitions%20-%20Specialist%20Homelessness%20Services%20%282022–23%29.pdf> accessed 20 December 2024.

34   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 11.

35   Ibid.

36   Victorian Government, *MARAM Tools in TRAM: Comprehensive Adults Using Violence Assessment Tool: Quarter 2 2022–23*, 1 March 2023, <https://www.vic.gov.au/maramis-quarterly-newsletter-quarter-2-2022-23/maram-tools-tram-comprehensive-adults-using> accessed 29 November 2024.

37   Crime Statistics Agency, *Family violence dashboard*, December 2023, <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/family-violence-data/family-violence-dashboard> accessed 3 May 2024; Data is sourced from: Ambulance Victoria, Child Protection, Coroners Court, Courtlink (Court database containing all finalised Family Violence Intervention Order applications), IRIS, Specialists Homelessness Services, Victoria Legal Aid, Victoria Police, Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset (containing 'information detailing presentations at Victorian public hospitals with designated Emergency Departments'), Victim Services, Support and Reform (VSSR) (within DJCS) Victims Assistance Program and VSSR Victims of Crime Helpline.

38   Crime Statistics Agency and Respect Victoria, *Prevention of family violence data platform*, June 2023, <https://files.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/Prevention-of-Family-Violence-Data-Platform.html> accessed 3 May 2024.

of perpetrator programs.[39] Researchers may also collect qualitative data through interviews or workshops with perpetrators and/or victim survivors.[40]

Work to improve the above frameworks, systems and resources that support the collection, sharing and analysis of data on people who use family violence is ongoing and includes:

- introducing a specific child and young person MARAM tool[41]

- developing a business case to replace IRIS[42]

- negotiating to include TOD information in CSA's FVDB[43]

- implementing the FVRIM's recommendations on misidentification.[44]

Consistent barriers to cross-sector data collection, sharing and use

As data is collected and held in multiple places, no one source provides all the information needed to understand people who use family violence.[45] While FVISS, CISS, MARAM and CIP have significantly improved family violence data sharing between many services across different sectors in Victoria, barriers remain. Consistent barriers to data collection, sharing and use identified by Inquiry stakeholders are discussed below.

System silos and data fragmentation

Many sectors operate in silos when it comes to what, when and how data about people using family violence is collected, linked and shared.[46] Some information is only accessible to certain services, meaning it is challenging to see all the services someone is using and to track their movements through sectors and multiple relationships.[47]

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39 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, pp. 6–8.

40 Ibid., pp. 7–8, 19.

41 Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 58.

42 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 13.

43 Crime Statistics Agency, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 5 August 2024, p. 1.

44 Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 67.

45 ANROWS, *Submission 15*, received 30 May 2024, p. 4; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, received 16 August 2024, p. 13.

46 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, received 30 May 2024, p. 8; Tarryn Chapman, Acting Principal Strategic Advisor, Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 20 August 2024, p. 1; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, received 14 June 2024, p. 4; ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 6; STARvibe Technology, *Submission 72*, received 18 September 2024, p. 4.

47 Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, received 30 May 2024, p. 4; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 9; Meli, *Submission 7*, received 27 May 2024, p. 4; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, received 31 May 2024, pp. 2, 4; Teal Bubb, *Submission 44*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3; McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, received 31 May 2024, p. 7.

Inquiry stakeholders identified the following examples of data silos:

- Hospitals, health, mental health, alcohol and other drugs (AOD) services collect data for service delivery, but there are inconsistencies in how it is shared and used to build a risk profile of a person using family violence.[48]

- Organisations that run specialist family violence and non-specialist services may be unaware of how people who use family violence access services within the same organisation.[49]

- Lack of consultation between courts and non-government organisations and sharing of risk-relevant information.[50]

- Some local service providers experience Victoria Police's capacity to share information differently and note that it is largely based on local arrangements and relationships.[51]

- Disengagement or removal from MBCPs is not centrally captured or shared beyond the provider of the program.[52]

- Specialist women's and men's services collect data without linking it to present a complete view of incidents and interventions.[53]

- Specialist family violence services having to make separate information sharing requests to individual agencies, making the process slow and burdensome, impacting timely family violence risk assessment.[54]

- IRIS data on people using family violence is siloed from SHIP, that is used by some specialist family violence and homelessness services to collect data, including on victim survivors.[55]

Data is also fragmented. Any given organisation may use multiple, different and unlinked databases. Organisations also report to multiple government departments. This multiple handling of data input is inefficient and complex.[56] See Part 2, Section 2.3 on improving family violence databases and systems.

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48 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, pp. 8, 14; Lisa Robinson, Director, Family Safety and Therapeutic Serivces, Meli, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18; Peninsula Health, *Submission 32*, received 31 May 2024, p. 2; Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, *Submission 22*, pp. 5, 8; Susan George, *Submission 55*, received 14 June 2024, pp. 4, 6; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, received 31 May 2024, p. 8.

49 Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 3.

50 Ibid., p. 5.

51 Ibid.; Bernadette McCartney, Executive Director, Services, Meli, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

52 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, pp. 5, 8.

53 McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, p. 10.

54 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, received 14 June 2024, p. 11; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 4; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, received 31 May 2024, p. 15.

55 Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 4.

56 Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 3; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 9; Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, received 17 May 2024, p. 2; Lauren Famulari, Manager, Evidence and Strategic Advocacy, The Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46. Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership note that agencies within their partnership report to the Department of Justice and Community Safety; Department of Families, Fairness and Housing; and Department of Health, see Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 2.

Data accuracy and reliability

Inquiry stakeholders identified the following concerns about the accuracy and reliability of current family violence data collection:

- **Inconsistent data collection standards:** Data collection practice in Victoria is not standardised.[57] The standard or framework applied to the data collection purpose impacts what and how data is recorded.[58] Different understandings of what family violence is leads to inconsistencies.[59] This includes knowledge of the many behaviours and relationships in which family violence can occur.

- **Bias in data collection:** This can be demographic, or relate to religion, culture, ethnicity and gender identity.[60] It is impacted by the biases of the person or people collecting the data and the required fields in data collection systems.[61] Biases are one of many factors that can lead to misidentification.[62]

- **Data collection is not always meaningful or what is needed:** Often data is not captured with the intent to understand people who use family violence, so it is not fit for that purpose.[63] Data captured is largely administrative, collected for service delivery or output measurements.[64] Databases are not designed to capture meaningful data on people who use family violence (for example, how to engage people using family violence or what works).[65]

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57   Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, received 31 May 2024, p. 4; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 13; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, received 31 May 2024, p. 1. The FVDCF is a 'tool for government and non-government service providers and agencies', with 'a set of data collection standards which organisations can elect to use in order to improve their collection of' family violence data; it is not compulsory to use. See Victorian Government, *Introduction*.

58   See Appendix A. Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 3; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, pp. 9, 16; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, received 14 June 2024, pp. 2, 5–6; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 6; Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 4.

59   Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 27, 28; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3. This is particularly relevant for First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse communities. See Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 49*, received 31 May 2024, p. 2; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, received 31 May 2024, p. 4; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 8; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, received 23 June 2024, p. 32.

60   Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 12; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 3; Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, received 31 May 2024, p. 6; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 6; One in Three Campaign, *Submission 60*, received 14 June 2024, p. 22.

61   Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, pp. 9, 23; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 12; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 4; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 6; Flat Out and Police Accountability Project, *Submission 38*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3; STARvibe Technology, *Submission 72*, p. 4.

62   Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, pp. 12–13; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 3; One in Three Campaign, *Submission 60*, p. 23.

63   ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 4; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 4; Fiona Dowsley, Chief Statistician, Crime Statistics Agency, public hearing, Melbourne, 22 July 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 3, 14.

64   National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 2; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 10; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 8; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, received 31 May 2024, p. 2; Darrylin Galanos, Acting Manager, Client Analytics and Reporting, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48; Amanda Alford, Director of Government Relations, Policy and Evidence, Our Watch, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18; Christine Robinson, Principal Strategic Advisor, Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 65; Olsen Clark, Policy and Advocacy Advisor, No to Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 50–51.

65   Tracey Golder, Program Manager, Specialist Family Violence, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52.

- **Collecting accurate data about diversity:** Demographic and/or diversity-related data, including ethnicity, sexuality and gender identity,[66] disability status, employment status, mental health and socioeconomic status, may be inconsistent and unreliable.[67] Services are not always accessible for diverse populations, contributing to data collection inaccuracy,[68] because of challenges such as language or communication barriers.[69]

- **Underreporting of family violence:** There are many reasons why family violence is underreported. Data is not captured from people who do not interact with services or the justice system.[70] Some victim survivors are disproportionally impacted by shame, stigma or cultural influences.[71] Some cultural and faith groups may encourage internal resolution instead of reporting.[72] A lack of trust in government and the service system may impact reporting for victim survivors from diverse backgrounds including First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse, migrant and LGBTIQA+ communities, and people with disability.[73] Underreporting in First Nations communities is further driven by fear of child removal and a lack of culturally safe spaces.[74] Trust can also extend to concerns about privacy and confidentiality.[75] Victim survivors may not report because they fear negative

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66 Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, received 14 June 2024, pp. 5–6; Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, received 31 May 2024, p. 5; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, pp. 2, 6, 7; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 4; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27. There is no national standard data set for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, though the Australian Bureau of Statistics has released statistics standards for culturally and linguistically diverse data, see Settlement Services International, *Submission 13*, received 29 May 2024, pp. 1–2; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 12. The use of ABS Standard for Sex, Gender, Variation of Sex Characteristics, and Sexual Orientation Variables 2020 is also suggested. See Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 2.

67 Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 2; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, pp. 6, 8; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 3.

68 Settlement Services International, *Submission 13*, pp. 1–2.

69 Ibid.; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, pp. 2, 4, 8.

70 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 6; Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 12; Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 45*, received 31 May 2024, p. 7; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 36; ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 7; Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 15; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, received 30 May 2024, p. 5; Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, received 26 July 2024, p. 5; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 2; MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, received 31 May 2024, pp. 3–4; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, received 5 June 2024, p. 10; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 6.

71 Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, pp. 2–3; Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, received 7 June 2024, p. 13; Settlement Services International, *Submission 13*, p. 1; Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 7; Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, pp. 3, 6; Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 1; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Cafs Ballarat, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 13 September 2024, p. 1.

72 MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 3; Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 1.

73 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 12; Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, pp. 2–3; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 13; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 4; Mystina McCabe, *Submission 2*, received 11 April 2024, p. 2; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 8; Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 7; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 19; Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, p. 6; Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 1; Cafs Ballarat, response to questions on notice, p. 1; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 32; Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, p. 4; ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 7.

74 Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 13; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, pp. 4–6; Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, p. 2; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 3.

75 Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Mika Pediaditis, Research and Evaluation Advisor, Women's Health Grampians, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 38.

repercussions for the person using violence, who may be older or younger, or waiting for an immigration assessment.[76]

Organisational capacity and databases

Data quality is impacted by the high level of administrative burden affecting data collection and sharing, resources and staff capabilities.[77] For many service providers, data collection and sharing is not core business but secondary to service delivery.[78] Service delivery demand creates a barrier to comprehensive data collection.[79] Services may not have capacity to invest time and money in training or resourcing to support data collection and sharing.[80]

Out-dated or onerous databases make data collection more burdensome. For example, while the Victorian Government is developing a business case to replace IRIS, in its current form it has limited capabilities and is difficult and inefficient to use.[81] It is 'built on legacy technology' which 'impacts the availability and quality of data that can be collected'.[82] See Part 2, Section 2.3 on improving family violence databases and systems.

Individual service providers use multiple and different databases and collect data for different purposes.[83] Varied data formats cause issues for analysis and sharing. Data is not easily extracted or comparable when collected and stored in hardcopy and handwritten case notes, scanned PDFs or case note fields.[84] Manual data extraction

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76 State Trustees, *Submission 54*, received 13 June 2024, p. 2; Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 9; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 3; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 9; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 19; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 19; Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 1.

77 Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 45*, p. 10; Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, received 31 May 2024, p. 5; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 18; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, pp. 7, 23; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 2; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 10; Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, pp. 12–13; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 7; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 4; Dr Kristin Diemer, Principal Research Fellow, The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, public hearing, Melbourne, 22 July 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

78 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 3.

79 Livia La Rocca, General Manager Intergrated Place-Based Services, Vic East and NSW, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 64.

80 ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 5; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 10; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 4; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 23.

81 Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, p. 2; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 4; Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, pp. 5–6; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 2; Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7; Kathleen Maltzahn, Chief Executive Officer, Sexual Assault Services Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 3, 8; Bec Wilkin, Acting Executive Manager Client Services, The Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48; Tania Farha, Chief Executive Officer, Safe and Equal, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52.

82 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 13.

83 Livia La Rocca, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 65; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 11; Lauren Famulari, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 2; Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 50.

84 Livia La Rocca, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 66; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 2; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 2; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 7; Susan George, *Submission 55*, pp. 4, 6; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 8; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

and processing[85] is inefficient and creates a barrier to assessing dynamic risk collaboratively.[86] Where organisations have the capacity to collate or analyse their data, this is largely occurring in silos and is not representative of the sector because of the small sample size.[87]

Increasing understanding of people who use family violence

Parts 1 and 2 of this report consider ways the Victorian Government can achieve a more holistic and purposeful approach to understanding people who use family violence through current data, collection, systems linkage and sharing.

Parts 3 and 4 of this report consider what areas the Victoria Government needs to know more about (beyond current data) to improve knowledge and understanding about people who use family violence, including through additional data sources and research.

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85   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 2; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 7; Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, received 14 June 2024, p. 1; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 8; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 14. While statutory agencies and government service providers are often equipped with databases that can compile information they hold as needed, others are working with limited resources and rely on manual extraction of information from client files. See Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 4.

86   Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 2.

87   Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 2; YSAS, *Submission 9*, p. 7.

Part 1
How to move toward a more purposeful approach

1

What the Committee heard

Part 1 | How to move toward a more purposeful approach

There is always a certain amount of [family violence] that is going to be hidden, so the question is more about how we maximise what we do have and how we deal with those limitations.

Crime Statistics Agency

Under-reporting of family violence is a critical issue that hampers the understanding of family violence. Many individuals may hesitate to report incidents due to fear, shame or a lack of trust in the system. This underreporting skews the data, leading to the incomplete picture of prevalence and nature of family violence. For men, the stigma associated with being victims or perpetrators of family violence exacerbates this problem.

Family Safety and Child Wellbeing, Child and Family Services Ballarat

While data is vital to understanding patterns of coercive control and potential lethality, blunt approaches to the use of data can also be counterproductive—discouraging victim survivors from seeking support where they fear that they may bear the brunt of the system response instead.

This means that it is critical to maintain a lens on the nuance in the numbers—so that data can only ever be used in a way that supports the overarching goal of keeping *all* Victorians safe [original emphasis].

Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University

In order to identify existing relevant datasets and the scope of the existing gaps in these datasets, it will first be important to undertake a comprehensive data mapping exercise. This mapping exercise will facilitate precise identification of the current available data and the questions that can be answered through analyses of these data. It will also enable the identification of questions that are not able to be examined based on existing datasets and why these questions are unable to be examined drawing on these data. These considerations can inform decision-making about the priority to be accorded to the identified gaps in the existing data. Addressing data gaps can occur through data linkage, adding data items to existing data collections or creating new data collections.

Australian Institute of Family Studies

While a call to understand more about people who use violence is absolutely understandable ... we need to understand the behaviours. The prevalence is so great that we need to acknowledge that there is no one type of person that we are seeking to understand here who uses violence. Perpetrators come from every corner of our community. They are the people that we know, in many cases that we love and that we work with. People who use violence are everywhere. They are part of families, friendship groups, workplaces, sporting clubs, and they can even be in our Parliament. Any approach to constructing data on perpetration needs to allow for this nuance. There will not be a single identity or profile to be found.

Respect Victoria

Data should be collected to overcome and prevent violence, reduce isolation from the community and demonstrate shared outcomes to survivors. There is often an emphasis on the data collection, but the purpose becomes obscured when it should strategically guide improvements on data collection.

Women with Disabilities Victoria

Prioritise meaningful outcomes rather than outputs. There is 'no silver bullet' for meaningful outcomes measures, however we do know some of the patterns and outcomes that are more meaningful for understanding [domestic, family and sexual violence] perpetration. For example, we know the value of victim-survivor accounts for measuring whether violence is ongoing.

ANROWS

For accurate and useful data collection, data must be dealt with in a way which is in line with principles of Indigenous Data Sovereignty to ensure data collection is culturally safe, readily accessible for the Aboriginal services who need it, and used in a way which is determined by and for Aboriginal people …

… Solutions to these issues start with listening to Aboriginal voices. We must embed the principles of self-determination and Indigenous data sovereignty in all parts of the data system. Our people should have control over how data about our people is collected, captured, interpreted and utilised. Aboriginal people should be in the driver's seat to find the solutions and supports for our people.

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

There could be more open discussions and feedback from government departments about how they use the data and what other types of data would be useful. There could also be more analysis of the data which feeds into an understanding of family violence and can guide the government and community sector to make evidence informed decisions.

Relationships Australia Victoria

How can we set up a mechanism of accountability? Accountability is at the heart of the work we do. We ask men to become accountable for their behaviour, but what about systems accountability?

No to Violence

I think maybe we need to visit the option of a systems monitor to be able to look at trends across the system, including data trends, and see how we are doing and how we are progressing in relation to some of these issues. Obviously that is not just about data, it is about practice and it is about working together and collaborating. So I am not talking about the implementation monitor, who ticked off the reforms and did a whole lot. I am talking about ongoing systems performance: how are we operating together as a system? And that would include some oversight of data—I think that would be really important.

Safe and Equal

Part 1 | How to move toward a more purposeful approach

1.1 Map the existing data and the gaps

Current and future data collection can contribute to a better understanding of use of family violence and improve prevention and response efforts.[1] Developing a defined understanding of the key questions to answer about people who use family violence will help identify what data collection and linkage to prioritise.[2]

Data on people using family violence in Victoria is collected and held in multiple places, and no one source provides the information needed to understand people using family violence.[3] The consistent barriers to data collection are discussed in the Background, *Consistent barriers to cross-sector data collection, sharing and use.*

A comprehensive mapping project would help to precisely identify:

* existing datasets relevant to Victoria, the information they hold (for example, on prevalence, risk and protective factors, and sexual violence),[4] and the questions that can be answered by analysing this existing data[5]

* the scope and nature of existing data gaps[6] (for example, the differences in risk factors for diverse communities, including First Nations people, people living with a disability and people from LGBTIQA+ and culturally and linguistically diverse communities)[7]

* the questions that cannot be answered based on existing data, and why[8]

* the datasets that are linked, are planned to be linked[9] or can be linked to bridge gaps, and what requires new data collections or the addition of data items to existing collections[10]

* the resources required to analyse data to answer key questions.[11]

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[1]   ANROWS, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria, response to written questions on notice received 9 October 2024, pp. 12–13.

[2]   Dr Lance Emerson, Deputy Secretary, eHealth, Department of Health, Centre for Victorian Data Linkage, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 8; Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, received 12 September 2024, p. 4.

[3]   ANROWS, *Submission 15*, received 30 May 2024, p. 4; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, received 16 August 2024, p. 13.

[4]   Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 8; Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, Chairperson, Respect Victoria Board, Respect Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 42.

[5]   Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 8; Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, p. 4; Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 42.

[6]   Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 8; Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, p. 4; Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39.

[7]   Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, p. 8.

[8]   Ibid., p. 4.

[9]   Ibid., pp. 2, 4.

[10] Ibid., p. 4.

[11] Ibid., p. 2.

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A better understanding of what data exists and what it can already do (or has the capability to do) will help the Victorian Government prioritise decisions to address data gaps.[12] Adjusting, linking or extracting the considerable amount of existing data could help build a fuller picture about people who use family violence, without creating further reporting or collection requirements.[13] See Part 4, Section 4.1.

> **FINDING 1:** Collecting data about people who use family violence is complex and there are inconsistences in what, when and how this data is collected. A comprehensive data mapping project is needed to identify existing datasets relevant to Victoria, the information they hold, and the questions that can be answered about people using family violence by linking or analysing this data. This project will highlight data gaps and inform priorities for future data collection.

> **RECOMMENDATION 1:** The Victorian Government undertake a data mapping project to precisely identify existing datasets relevant to people using family violence in Victoria. This project should:
>
> • outline the information these datasets hold, or could provide
>
> • explore the questions that can or cannot be answered through data analysis and linkage
>
> • define the scope and nature of existing gaps.

1.2   Acknowledge the complexities of family violence data

Collecting, storing, sharing, linking, using, analysing and conducting research that uses data about people who use family violence is complex, but essential to increase understanding of family violence perpetration. Together with the privacy, consent and confidentiality considerations relevant to family violence data there are other complexities that need to be acknowledged. Privacy and consent considerations are discussed in detail at Appendix B.

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12   Ibid., p. 4. See also, Appendix A that includes two tables mapping data collection and related frameworks that apply across relevant stakeholders for capturing data on persons using family violence in Victoria.

13   Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, received 5 June 2024, p. 10; Dr Jozica Kutin, General Manager, Advocacy and Service Impact, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59.

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1.2.1 Current administrative and systems data is skewed

Current data is heavily skewed towards people in contact with the justice or service systems[14] and those at the highest risk.[15] This means conclusions drawn from this data may not be applicable to the broader Victorian people.

People may be in contact with the justice or service systems for a variety of reasons including due to over-policing, over-surveillance or stereotypes,[16] 'structural racism',[17] a lack of alternate and appropriate services,[18] or because they are underprivileged.[19] As a result, current data is often collected about the most disadvantaged, stigmatised and marginalised people in the community.[20]

Inquiry stakeholders identified that skewed data should not solely be relied on because:

- it is not accurately representative,[21] with people in contact with the justice or service systems representing only a small proportion of people using or experiencing family violence,[22] meaning data analysis will not always apply to the broader Victorian community[23]

- it does not provide a comprehensive understanding of people using family violence and certain types of family violence (for example, physical violence is more likely captured than coercive control, emotional abuse or financial abuse)[24]

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14 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, received 14 June 2024, p. 7; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 2; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, received 30 May 2024, p. 5; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, received 14 June 2024, p. 6; Amanda Alford, Director of Government Relations, Policy and Evidence, Our Watch, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, received 23 June 2024, p. 5.

15 Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 64; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 10.

16 Tania Farha, Chief Executive Officer, Safe and Equal, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 54; Professor Michael Flood, Professor, QUT Centre for Justice, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Respect Victoria, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 10 September 2024, p. 2; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 15; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 3; Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, received 31 May 2024, p. 6.

17 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 9.

18 Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 54.

19 Dr Nicola Helps, Senior Project Officer, ANROWS, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40.

20 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 2; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 3; Amanda Alford, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 5; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 15.

21 Amanda Alford, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22.

22 Ibid., p. 16; Joshua Lourensz, Executive Director, Catholic Social Services Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, received 31 May 2024, p. 13; Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 12; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, received 31 May 2024, p. 2; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, pp. 5, 8; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 6.

23 Joshua Lourensz, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 5.

24 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 2; ANROWS, *Submission 15,* p. 6.

- it renders certain population groups invisible,[25] as people who do not engage with services are less likely to have their data collected,[26] as are people who have the means to access private providers[27]

- it can lead to unfair assumptions[28] and further stigmatise communities,[29] including racial profiling and further injustices for First Nations peoples[30]

- it risks a hyper-visibility of already disadvantaged, marginalised and stigmatised people, while enabling the violence of less visible population groups[31]

- more data collection could reflect a 'hypervigilance around marginalised communities' and lead to inaccurate data reporting,[32] for example, young people in contact with the service system often experience significant disadvantage and are examined more than other groups of young people.[33]

1.2.2   Current publicly reported data obscures long-term trends

Public reporting data uses crime-related statistics[34] and incident reports from the justice and service systems.[35] As it can be many years before a victim survivor reports family violence and the person using family violence becomes known to the system, data is not always collected at the start of a person's experience.[36] As family violence is often unreported and unrecorded, focusing on incident-based justice or service data obscures long-term patterns of power and control,[37] and does not provide a full picture of people using family violence,[38] nor an accurate representation of family violence

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25   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 2; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 3.

26   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 2; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 6; MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 3.

27   Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 6.

28   Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3.

29   Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 36, 40. See also Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, p. 6.

30   Elia Pourasgheri, Director, Family, Youth and Children's Law, Victoria Legal Aid, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 3; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 15.

31   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 2; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 12; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 18; Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, p. 6; Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

32   Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 36, 40. See also Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, p. 6.

33   Dom Ennis, Acting Chief Executive Officer, YSAS, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35, see also Bianca Johnston, Family Violence Specialist, YSAS, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35; Amy Cupper, Manager of Family Safety, Mallee Accommdation and Support Program, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 38.

34   Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, received 26 July 2024, p. 4; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 10; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 1.

35   Elia Pourasgheri, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 10; Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 45*, received 31 May 2024, p. 7; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 1.

36   Dr Kristin Diemer, Principal Research Fellow, The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, public hearing, Melbourne, 22 July 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 19.

37   Elia Pourasgheri, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4; Rachael Pliner, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Federation of Community Legal Centres, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5.

38   Rachael Pliner, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5; Professor Michael Flood, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Ella Mackay, Manager Family Safety and Child Wellbeing, Cafs Ballarat, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35; Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 45*, p. 7; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 8.

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prevalence.[39] While family violence incidents reported to Victoria Police have increased by approximately 400% over the past 20 years,[40] public reporting captured by CSA only represents a small proportion of the population using family violence because many incidences go unreported.[41]

1.2.3 Building profile data carries risks

Family violence is perpetrated by people from all walks of life and demographic backgrounds.[42] Specific profiles and behavioural characteristics are difficult to determine for people not in contact with services.[43] There are risks that pursuing perpetrator profiles will:

- stigmatise particular groups as more likely to use family violence

- potentially increase misidentification (see Part 2, *Prioritise rectification processes to correct misidentification*)

- mask the violence of more privileged groups[44]

- lead to a focus on certain profiles over others.[45]

Some service providers may be reluctant to provide data that could be used to profile.[46] Perpetrator profiles should be based on attitudes, behaviours and previous experiences rather than demographic or identity characteristics that risk 'creating a taxonomy that people can use to remove themselves from culpability, thinking that because they do not fit a particular profile, they do not need to be concerned about their behaviour'.[47]

While understanding patterns is important, there is a risk of inferring profiles or patterns beyond the data or misrepresenting the true prevalence of family violence across the community.[48] Patterns will not apply universally. For example, some people with childhood experiences of family violence will not go on to perpetrate family violence.[49]

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39   Amy Cupper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35.

40   Lauren Callaway, Assistant Commissioner, Family Violence Command, Victoria Police, public hearing, Melbourne, 9 September 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14.

41   Elia Pourasgheri, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 2.

42   Fiona Bilucaglia, Principal Practitioner for Family Violence, Mallee Sexual Assault Unit and Mallee Domestic Violence Services, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39; Amy Cupper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40; Professor Manjula O'Connor, Consultant Psychiatrist, Chair RANZCP Family Violence Psychiatry Network, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51; Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

43   Amy Cupper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 13.

44   Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33.

45   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 15.

46   Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9.

47   Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, received 19 July 2024, p. 13.

48   Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

49   Ibid.

1.2.4 Complexities of existing data collection methods and processes

Inquiry stakeholders also raised the following complexities:

- **Biases in data collection**: Data is primarily obtained from the victim survivor seeking support, and the questions asked about the behaviour of a person using family violence are focused on keeping the victim survivor safe rather than to build an in-depth understanding of the person using family violence.[50] Data is often collected at a time of heightened stress and may not always be reliable, corroborated or complete; nor provide an accurate picture of the person using family violence's circumstances.[51] Underreporting is also a bias, which may stem from issues including a mistrust in services and the justice system.[52] For example, a person from a marginalised community may not feel safe to report because of prior negative experiences. See Background, *Consistent barriers to cross-sector data collection, sharing and use* and Part 2, Section 2.2.4. Data based on self-disclosure may not be accurate because the stigma and shame associated with family violence, for both victim survivors and people who use family violence, means people may minimise or deny when reporting.[53]

- **Biases in data recording**: Recording methods, required data fields and the person inputting information shape administrative data, which can lead to demographic biases.[54] Current data collection and reporting processes emphasise perpetration by marginalised men, resulting in a skewed understanding. For example, while data on employment or unemployment is collected, salary range is not, hiding violence amongst wealthier cohorts.[55] Biases in datasets are a risk for machine learning and artificial intelligence, as it can embed inaccurate assumptions[56]

- **Trust between services and sectors**: Service providers may not enter information into databases and share it, to protect the privacy, safety or autonomy of victim survivors.[57] There may be a level of mistrust between services which means information is not shared readily under FVISS or CISS.[58] For example, a victim survivor service may be reluctant to share information with a person using family violence service because of a safety concern.[59] See Part 2, Section 2.4.

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50 Joshua Lourensz, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, received 31 May 2024, p. 9; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 8. For example, Victoria Police L17 reports are designed to practically and comprehensively assess and manage family violence risk, not collect data about the complexity of a person using family violence's background. See Part 2, Section 2.1.4 for further discussion on L17s.

51 Bianca Brijnath, Director Social Gerontology, National Ageing Research Institute, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, received 30 May 2024, p. 2.

52 Matt Tyler, Executive Director, Community and Systems Impact, Jesuit Social Services, pubic hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20; Dr Jill Gallagher, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, public hearing, Melbourne, 9 September 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2.

53 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 19.

54 Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 12.

55 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, pp. 7–8.

56 STARvibe Technology, *Submission 72*, received 18 September 2024, p. 4.

57 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 5.

58 Christine Robinson, Principal Strategic Advisor, Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 64.

59 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22

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- **Context of data collection**: Data collected for risk assessments is distinct from data collected to understand the nature, drivers, motivators, dynamics and prevalence of family violence.[60] Administrative data is not often collected for research purposes, leading to limitations in the data and raising ethical concerns for data custodians and analysts to navigate.[61] Analysis of administrative data for research purposes can 'result in an incomplete picture' missing 'nuance and context' and risk imposing findings that manipulate data beyond the purpose of its collection.[62]

- **Deficit-based approaches**: Current 'deficit-based' data collection, like risk assessments[63] or reporting through CSA,[64] can be harmful because it equates risks or markers (like AOD use) with outcomes (like use of violence), often inferring incorrect causation. This can reduce people or groups to these markers and stigmatise the problem or the people, exacerbating marginalisation and discouraging behaviour change. It also ignores other relevant information (like childhood trauma), and skews understanding of family violence. For example, while AOD and family violence are correlated, addressing problematic AOD use would not necessarily end all family violence (though may reduce severity).[65]

There is a risk that greater data linkage could exacerbate these issues if linked data is not sufficiently contextualised when interpreted.[66] See Part 4, Section 4.1.5.

1.2.5 Addressing the complexities of data collection methods and processes

To address these complexities and build a more complete picture of people who use family violence to inform policy, responses and interventions,[67] Inquiry stakeholder suggestions included:

- **Contextualise data when it is analysed**:[68] Consider the way data was collected, the context of how it was collected, the reason or purpose it was collected[69] and how these may influence data and analysis.[70] Data collected for one purpose should not be misused for another purpose.[71]

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60 Amanda Alford, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 3.

61 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 2; ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 6.

62 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 2.

63 ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 4.

64 Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, p. 3.

65 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 11.

66 Ibid., p. 5.

67 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 10.

68 Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, received 14 June 2024, p. 8; Rachael Pliner, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5; Joshua Lourensz, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 2.

69 Amanda Alford, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 2.

70 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 2.

71 Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 11.

- **Question whose violence is visible or invisible**:[72] When using or linking administrative data, think critically about who is overlooked, who is brought into scope and how this information is used to inform policy and practice.[73]

- **Recognise structural inequities**:[74] Consider how demographic data is influenced by the ways people interact with government and systems and the impacts of ableism, 'structural racism'[75] and communication barriers.[76]

- **Bring historically hidden users of family violence into view**:[77] Focusing efforts to do so will challenge skewed representations of people using family violence.[78]

- **Involve people with lived experience, expertise and understanding of nuances**:[79] When interpreting data or designing data mechanisms, prioritise collaborative practice with service settings like AOD and mental health, input from service providers skilled in navigating stigmatisation and disadvantage complexities, and involve diverse or marginalised communities to ensure data collection, analysis, dissemination and policy application does not inadvertently exacerbate harms.[80] This is important for ensuring data improvements are sensitive and meaningful.[81]

- **Collate and triangulate data from multiple sources**: This can help form a more accurate picture of people who use family violence (for example, complementing data collection with a prevalence survey,[82] see Part 4, *Population-based survey*).[83] Use qualitative data to draw meaningful and accurate insights from quantitative data.[84]

- **Collect data for the right purposes and not to criminalise**: Collect data to keep all Victorians safe,[85] inform prevention and intervention efforts,[86] inform harm minimisation and strength-based approaches and intervention points, inform

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72   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 2, 6.

73   Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 33, 36; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 3; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 2, 6.

74   Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

75   Rachael Pliner, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5

76   Ibid.; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 8.

77   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 12; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 5; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, received 31 May 2024, p. 4; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 18.

78   No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 18.

79   Vivienne Nguyen, Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46; Rasha Abbas, Chief Executive Officer, inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46; Respect Victoria, response to questions on notice, p. 2; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 5.

80   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 12; Vivienne Nguyen, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46; Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46; Respect Victoria, response to questions on notice, p. 2; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 5.

81   Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 5.

82   Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 9; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 9.

83   Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 50; Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 15.

84   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 7; ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 5.

85   Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 39.

86   Tracey Golder, Program Manager, Specialist Family Violence, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 57; Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

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pathways out of violence using non-punitive responses and services,[87] monitor risk and encourage help seeking.[88] Do not unnecessarily use data to criminalise, particularly when focusing on early intervention and prevention,[89] or to 'name and shame a particular community'.[90] Data use that is not nuanced may be counterproductive and discourage people from seeking help.[91]

FINDING 2: People from all backgrounds perpetrate family violence but current data represents only a small proportion of people perpetrating or experiencing family violence. Existing administrative and publicly reported data on people using family violence may be biased and skewed towards people in contact with the service and justice systems, who are often the most disadvantaged, stigmatised and marginalised people in the community. Improving data capability to capture people using family violence who do not engage with justice or service systems is essential to building understanding of all people who use family violence across different groups and communities.

FINDING 3: Perpetrator profiles based on demographic or identity characteristics risk stigmatising particular groups as more or less likely to use family violence. This means profiling can enable some perpetrators to avoid accountability if they do not fit a common stereotype. Perpetrator profiles should focus on attitudes, behaviours and experiences rather than demographic or identity traits, as these profiles will not apply universally. Family violence data and its analysis must be contextualised for it to be effective in building a fuller picture of people who use family violence to inform policy, responses, interventions and research that supports all Victorians.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Victorian Government develop and distribute resources to assist stakeholders and researchers to consider nuance and context in data collection, sharing, linkage, use, analysis and research about people who use family violence, including how to recognise the limitations of data (for example, structural inequities or invisible and historically hidden violence) and involve people with lived experience and expertise to understand the complexities.

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87   Tracey Golder, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 57.

88   Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36; Respect Victoria, response to questions on notice, p. 2.

89   Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9.

90   Professor Manjula O'Connor, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51; Respect Victoria, response to questions on notice, p. 2.

91   Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 39.

Prioritise Indigenous Data Sovereignty

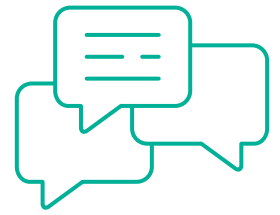> **Indigenous Data Sovereignty is:**
>
> - an international, Indigenous-led movement seeking to remedy government methods of holding Indigenous peoples' records and assert the sovereignty of First Peoples over their own information
>
> - the right of Indigenous Peoples to own, control, access and possess data that derive from them, and which pertain to their members, knowledge systems, customs, resources, or territories.
>
> Yoorrook Justice Commission[a]

The best outcomes for First Nations peoples are achieved when they have a say in the things that affect them and their everyday lives, and the supports they need.[b] Prioritising the application of Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles, including to data about people who use family violence, is a critical step to reducing violence against First Nations women, families and communities.[c]

Indigenous Data Sovereignty will give First Nations communities control over how family violence data is 'collected, captured, interpreted and utilised'.[d] Progressing First Nations-led family violence research, respecting its value and learning from its outcomes,[e] and strengthening the capacity for First Nations organisations to monitor and evaluate family violence prevention and intervention initiatives,[f] need to be a focus.

Several Inquiry stakeholders supported the adoption of the *Maiam nayri Wingara (the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty Collective, Indigenous Data Sovereignty techniques and principles)* in Victoria.[g] Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to guide the implementation of Indigenous Data Sovereignty in Victoria included:

- Use the OCCAAARS Framework for First Nations Data Sovereignty developed by Kowa, as well as other government frameworks such as Australia's Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data, to support operationalism.[h]

- Acknowledge that 'true' data sovereignty is a community-by-community solution,[i] as First Nations communities are not homogenous.[j]

- Ensure First Nations communities have input in how data is collected, and the methodologies used in survey design.[k]

- Listen to, value and be guided by the voices of Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs).[l]

a Yoorrook Justice Commission, *Indigenous Data Soverignty and data governance*, information sheet. **b** Dr Jill Gallagher, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2; Australian Government, *Closing the Gap 2020*, <https://ctgreport.niaa.gov.au/content/closing-gap-2020> accessed 25 October 2024. **c** Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 11; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, pp. 6–7; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 5; Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, received 31 May 2024, p. 8; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, pp. 3–4; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 17; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 6, 16; Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, pp. 5–7; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 37; Djirra, *Submission 8*, received 27 May 2024, p. 1. **d** Dr Jill Gallagher, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2. **e** Wayne Freeman, Director, Aboriginal Initiatives, Family Safety Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 63–64; Rebecca Buys, Head of Policy and Research, No to Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 54; Phillip Ripper, Chief Executive Officer, No to Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 54. **f** Sheree Lowe, Executive Director of the Balit Durn Durn Centre, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, public hearing, Melbourne, 9 September 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9; Dr Jill Gallagher, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9; Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms: Reform governance*, 2022, p. 29. **g** Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 6; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 19; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 5; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 17. See Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective, *Maiam nayri Wingara*, <https://www.maiamnayriwingara.org> accessed 25 October 2024. **h** ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 16. Kowa Collaboration supports First Nations organisations and communities to amplify their purpose through impact measurement, evaluation and learning. Kowa, *Who we are*, <https://www.kowacollaboration.com/about> accessed 18 November 2024. The OCCAAARS (Ownership, Control, Custodianship, Access, Accountable to First Nations, Amplify Community Voices, Relevant & Reciprocal, Sustainably self-determining) Framework was developed to support grassroots organisations, programs and peoples define elements and principles of Indigenous data sovereignty and governance. See Skye Trudgett, Kowa, *Maiam nayri Wingara, How might you practically apply Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance?*, 2022 <https://www.indigenousjustice.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/IJC-Presentation.pdf> accessed 21 November 2024. **i** Patrick Cook, Head of Policy, Communications and Strategy, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 11–12. **j** Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 21–22. **k** Amanda Alford, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 21–22. **l** Ibid.

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of working with ACCOs to ensure that First Nations peoples' ownership and control over family violence data collection, analysis and use aligns with Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles.[a] The Dhelk Dja Partnership Forum, established to address issues of family violence for First Nations peoples, considered what family violence data was meaningful and valuable to develop a Dhelk Dja data pack. The Partnership Forum is currently working on a regional data pack and other activities that take steps toward Indigenous Data Sovereignty.[b] For data linkage, Centre for Victorian Data Linkage (CVDL) advised it is working on initial scoping with the sector for Indigenous Data Sovereignty.[c]

The 2024 Review of Australia's 2020 National Agreement on Closing the Gap found there had been no significant change in how governments work with data and with First Nations peoples in relation to data.[d] The Review recommended the Agreement on Closing the Gap be amended to include Indigenous Data Sovereignty, accompanied by the adoption of the definitions of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance, as detailed in the *Maiam nayri Wingara*.[e]

In a Victorian first, the Yoorrook Justice Commission is applying Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles to the collection, handling, storage and use of First Peoples' information.[f] In response to a recommendation of the Commission, and following consultation with stakeholders, a bill to 'uphold First Peoples' choices[g] about how evidence they provide to the Commission should be treated once the Commission ends' was passed by the Victorian Parliament in February 2025.[h] The Commission serves as an example of how Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles can be applied in Victoria.

Inquiry stakeholders identified that facilitating Indigenous Data Sovereignty could help:

- recognise the historical legacies of colonialism[i] and the harms from a systems failure to respond to violence experienced by First Nations peoples[j]

- overcome First Nations communities' valid fears and mistrust of engaging with services and data collection processes,[k] and create a more culturally safe system.[l]

Canada and New Zealand implemented Indigenous Data Sovereignty policies in 1998 and 2023, respectively.[m] Reflecting on these experiences may help guide the Victorian and Australian Governments as they take steps to adopt Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

a Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 14; Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Strong Foundations: Building on Victoria's work to end family violence*, 2023. **b** Wayne Freeman, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 61–62, 64; Amber Griffiths, Executive Director, Family and Sexual Violence Programs, Family Safety Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 61–62, 64. **c** Dr Lance Emerson, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 6–7. **d** Australian Government Productivity Commission, *Review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap*, factsheet, p. 5. **e** Recommendation 2. See ibid., p. 15. A practical tool drawing on data for governance functions against each *Maiam nayri Wingara* principle was developed at the 2nd National Indigenous Data Governance Summit in 2023. This tool can be used as a guide for organisations, groups and communities to embed Indigenous Data Sovereignty. See Lowitja Institute, Taking control of our data: A discussion paper on Indigenous data governance for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities, 2024, p. 15. **f** Yoorrook Justice Commission, Indigenous Data Sovereignty and data governance. **g** Hon Natalie Hutchins MP, 'Inquiries Amendment (Yoorrook Justice Commission Records and Other Matters) Bill 2024: Second reading speech', delivered at 13 November 2024. **h** *Inquiries Amendment (Yoorrook Justice Commission Records and Other Matters) Act 2025* (Vic). The Act received Royal Assent in February 2025. **i** Ebony King, Senior Policy Advisor, Our Watch, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 21–22. **j** Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 5. **k** National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, received 31 May 2024, p. 6; Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 21–22. **l** Sheree Lowe, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12. **m** First Nations Information Governance Centre, *The First Nations Principles of OCAP*, <https://fnigc.ca/ocap-training> accessed 18 November 2024; Te Kāhui Raraunga, *Māori data governance model* 26 May 2023, <https://www.kahuiraraunga.io/maoridatagovernance> accessed 18 November 2024.

FINDING 4: Adopting and embedding Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles in family violence research and data collection processes will give First Nations' communities greater control over how family violence data about First Nations peoples is collected and interpreted, and support better outcomes for First Nations' communities.

FINDING 5: Applying Indigenous Data Sovereignty across all the findings and recommendations made in this Inquiry report is important to ensure the benefits of any government actions taken in response to the report are shared by First Nations peoples.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Victorian Government prioritise the implementation of Indigenous Data Sovereignty for family violence research and data collection and adopt the *Maiam nayri Wingara*, the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty Collective, Indigenous Data Sovereignty techniques and principles, while concurrently enhancing information sharing where appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The Victorian Government support First Nations organisations to:

- build capacity to monitor and evaluate family violence data, family violence prevention and intervention initiatives and invest in First Nations-led family violence research

- work with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations in Victoria to actively promote the value and learnings of these activities.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The Victorian Government advocate at a national level for the 2020 National Agreement on Closing the Gap to be amended to include Indigenous Data Sovereignty, along with enhanced information sharing where appropriate, as part of the outcome statement for Priority Reform 4, accompanied by the adoption of the definitions of Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance, as detailed in the *Maiam nayri Wingara*.

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1.3 Continually improve coordination, oversight and accountability of data collection

An integrated and collaborative system that promotes transparency, coordination and communication between the Victorian Government, agencies and service providers ensures accurate and consistent data collection.[92] A strategic and coordinated approach to improving data about people who use family violence would strengthen understanding of current and future demand, risk profiles, service system gaps and improvement opportunities, efficacy of intervention strategies and emerging data trends.[93] Solutions and reforms in the family violence sector need to be robust, with consideration given to the wellbeing and capacity of staff to learn new systems or skills and adapt to ongoing reform.[94]

The Victorian Government's family violence plans, strategies, rolling action plans, outcomes, indicators, measures and reporting must be continually reviewed to ensure they align and are easy to navigate. See *Victoria's approach to ending family violence* (Figure) below on the relationship between current plans, strategies and rolling action plans.

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92   Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, received 14 June 2024, p. 7.

93   Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, received 30 May 2024, p. 13.

94   Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, received 31 May 2024, p. 7.

Victoria's approach to ending family violence

Key principles

10-YEAR PLAN

Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change (2016)

Outlines Victoria's family violence reform agenda and a vision for a future where all Victorians are safe, thriving and free from family violence.

Rolling action plans:
- ● 2017–2020
- ● 2020–2023
- ○ 2025–2027

FVOF

Family Violence Outcomes Framework (2020)

Focuses on outcomes across four domains: prevention, victim survivors, perpetrators and system responses.

Each domain has specific outcomes to track improvements in prevention, safety, accountability and system integration.

DHELK DJA

Safe Our Way – Strong Culture, Strong Peoples, Strong Families (2018)

Key Aboriginal-led agreement that commits Aboriginal communities, Aboriginal services and government to work together to end family violence against Aboriginal people. Built upon the foundation of self-determination.

Supporting strategies

Free from violence: Victoria's Strategy to prevent family violence and all forms of violence against women (2017)

Drives cultural change to address the norms, practices and systems that condone or enable violence.

Rolling action plans:
- ● 2018–2021
- ● 2022–2025
- ○ 2025–2028

Building from strength: 10-Year Industry Plan for Family Violence Prevention and Response (2017)

Outlines a roadmap to strengthen the skills, capability and wellbeing of workforces that respond to family violence across Victoria.

Rolling action plans:
- ● 2019–2022
- ● 2023–2026
- ○ TBC

FVOF Measurement and Monitoring Implementation Strategy (2021)

Translates the reform's vision into a quantifiable set of outcomes, indicators and measures to help measure the progress and impact of the reforms.

Everybody Matters: Inclusion and Equity Statement (2018)

Sets out the government's vision for a family violence system that is more inclusive, safe, responsive and accountable. It aims to support all Victorians without discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, age or ability.

Reporting requirements

Ending family violence annual reports

Report progress of *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's Plan for Change*, rolling action plan activities and FVOF.

Specialist family violence service providers funded by the department

Report on output-based performance measures and targets. The data supports performance reporting on service delivery.

MARAM annual reports

Provide an overview of the progress, challenges, and implementation of the MARAM Framework across relevant sectors. From 2025, MARAM annual reports will include updates on the application of AUFV (Adults Using Family Violence) practice guides.

Rolling action plans
- ● released
- ○ not released

Source: Victorian Government, *Free from violence: Victoria's strategy to prevent family violence*, 5 April 2022, <https://www.vic.gov.au/free-violence-victorias-strategy-prevent-family-violence> accessed 15 April 2024; Victorian Government, *Building from strength: 10-year industry plan for family violence prevention and response*, 7 May 2021, <https://www.vic.gov.au/building-strength-10-year-industry-plan> accessed 8 April 2024; Victorian Government, *Dhelk Dja: safe our way*, 19 April 2021, <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-reform-rolling-action-plan-2020-2023/priorities-for-2020-2023/dhelk-dja-safe-our-way> accessed 8 April 2024; Victorian Government, *Ending family violence—Victoria's 10-year plan for change*, 29 December 2020, <https://www.vic.gov.au/ending-family-violence-victorias-10-year-plan-change> accessed 8 April 2024.

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There is opportunity for indicators and measures to better align to overarching strategies to provide greater insights into perpetrator accountability and what works. For example, under *Domain 3: Perpetrators (Perpetrators are held accountable, connected and take responsibility for stopping their violence),* the FVOF has three outcomes,[95] the FVOF Implementation Strategy has one outcome and two indicators, each with two measures,[96] and the *Ending family violence: annual report 2022*, has two indicators, with five measures each.[97]

The Victorian Government's strategies, plans and funding models for other sectors, like AOD or mental health that engage with people who use family violence, also must be continually reviewed to ensure they align with the family violence framework. Collective responsibility across the whole community and different sectors can address and minimise harm through intersecting policies and strategies.[98] See Part 2, Section 2.5.4.

The Victorian Government is entering a new stage in its response to family violence, shifting focus to holding people who use family violence accountable.[99] The Royal Commission's recommendations are implemented and the FVRIM made recommendations to progress family violence reform during its term. While FSV has led the state's nation-leading response to family violence, family violence remains a whole of government issue that requires commitment across government, the community and workforces.[100]

A specific priority of the Victorian Government's second rolling action plan 2020–2023 under the *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's 10-Year Plan for Change* is 'creating a system-wide approach to create an effective web of accountability for perpetrators and people who use violence'.[101] This relies on the service system and the broader community working together to stop people who use family violence from committing further violence, hold them to account, keep them in view and support them to change their behaviour and attitudes.[102] The Victorian Government's 2023 *Strong Foundations* sets out five priorities that will inform the 'concrete actions' (and timeframes and

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95   Victorian Government, *The Family Violence Outcomes Framework*, pp. 6–7.

96   State of Victoria, *Family Violence Outcomes Framework Measurement and Monitoring Implementation Strategy*, report prepared by Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2020, p. 23.

97   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Ending family violence: annual report 2022*, 2023, pp. 46–51.

98   Gillian Clark, AOD Strategy and Reform Manager, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31; Dom Ennis, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 31–32; Elena Campbell, Associate Director, Research, Advocacy and Policy, Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 8.

99   Jac Dwyer, Practice Development, Training and Capacity Building Projects, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51; Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms—Service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family*, 2023, p. 13; Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Strong Foundations*, p. 38. *Strong Foundations* states that 'Too often, people who use violence are not held accountable for their behaviour … We must continue to shift the focus onto perpetrators'.

100   Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 3–4.

101   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Ending family violence: annual report 2022*, p. 10.

102   Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms—Service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family*, p. 13.

responsibilities) for the next rolling action plan. Many of the areas covered in this Inquiry reflect the priorities identified in *Strong Foundations*.[103]

This Inquiry and its recommendations about achieving a more holistic understanding of people using family violence are directly related to the Victorian Government's identified priorities and strategic direction to end family violence. Linking this Inquiry's work to the Victorian Government's overarching strategies, frameworks and plans is essential to ensure ongoing coordinated implementation of family violence reform.

FINDING 6: To achieve a more holistic understanding of people using family violence, including risk profiles, service system gaps, efficacy of intervention strategies and emerging data trends, the Victorian Government must continually look for opportunities to better align and improve coordination, oversight and accountability across and within the family violence system.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The Victorian Government continually review relevant plans, strategies, rolling action plans, outcomes, indicators, measures and reporting to ensure they better align with the Government's strategic approach to family violence reform and are easy to navigate, and regularly publicly report on actions taken. This includes linking the implementation of recommendations made in this Inquiry report to the Victorian Government's overarching strategies, frameworks and plans.

1.3.1   Independent whole-of-system oversight

The extensive reform in the family violence sector that the Victorian Government undertook following the Royal Commission into Family Violence was supported with oversight and public reporting at regular intervals by the FVRIM.

Inquiry stakeholders suggested that an independent whole-of-system oversight mechanism could improve systems accountability,[104] including how the family violence system operates and how sectors work together.[105] An oversight mechanism independent to service providers and departments with funding responsibility would

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103 This includes ensuring governments, peak organisations, data custodians and service providers are equipped to collect, analyse and use data in ways that add value to work and reduce administrative burden (see Part 2); shifting the focus to people using family violence, including accountability and service provision at the right time for different people to change behaviour in the long term (see Part 4) and intervening early (see Part 2); addressing misidentification (see Part 2); strengthening engagement with people who use family violence to learn about interventions that work (see Part 4); supporting First Nations people who use family violence (see *Prioritise Indigenous Data Sovereignty* above); collecting better intersectional data (see Parts 2 and 3); better understanding the underlying attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that support use of family violence (see Part 3); linking data to see the full picture, understand what is or is not working and analyse the journeys of victim survivors and people using family violence through the service system (see Part 4); employing more diverse and skilled staff and working with diverse Victorians to design programs and monitor success (see Part 2); understanding challenges associated with new forms of family and sexual violence, like technology-facilitated abuse (see Part 3); improving how impact is measured and demonstrated (see Section 1.5); and supporting children and young people (see Part 3). See Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Strong Foundations.*

104 Rebecca Buys, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

105 Phillip Ripper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 3; Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

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build a 'web of government accountability'.[106] For example, FVRIM, which ceased in 2023, was viewed by stakeholders as 'nation-leading and [an] absolute crucial … accountability mechanism'.[107]

Many issues considered in this Inquiry were raised in past FVRIM reports, for example, misidentification,[108] responses and interventions for perpetrators and people using family violence,[109] early identification,[110] children and young people[111] and improvements to MARAM, FVISS and CISS.[112] For example, stakeholders reported to the 2023 FVRIM review into MARAM and FVISS that:

- insufficient and short-term funding impeded the implementation of FVISS and MARAM reforms

- the phased development of MARAM practice guides posed challenges

- MARAM and FVISS training quality and accessibility was mixed

- ongoing/refresher training and professional development are key to understanding MARAM and FVISS

- use of different IT and case management systems was a barrier to implementing FVISS and MARAM reforms, including concerns about adequacy of IT systems for secure storage of confidential information.[113]

The FVRIM 'strongly suggest[ed] that the FVISS, [CIP] and MARAM reforms be reviewed again by the end of 2026'.[114]

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106 Rebecca Buys, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 50.

107 Ibid., p. 49.

108 Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms: Accurate identification of the predominant aggressor*, 30 May 2023, <https://www.fvrim.vic.gov.au/monitoring-victorias-family-violence-reforms-accurate-identification-predominant-aggressor> accessed 18 November 2024.

109 Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms—Service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family*, 25 January 2023, <https://www.fvrim.vic.gov.au/monitoring-victorias-family-violence-reforms-service-response-perpetrators-and-people-using-violence-within-family> accessed 8 April 2024.

110 Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms: Early identification of family violence within universal services*, 1 May 2022, <https://www.fvrim.vic.gov.au/monitoring-victorias-family-violence-reforms-early-identification-family-violence-within-universal> accessed 18 November 2024.

111 Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Fourth report to Parliament (as at 1 November 2020) – tabled May 2021*, 6 May 2021, <https://www.fvrim.vic.gov.au/fourth-report-parliament-1-november-2020-tabled-may-2021> accessed 18 November 2024.

112 Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Independent legislative review of family violence reforms*, 30 May 2022, <https://www.fvrim.vic.gov.au/independent-legislative-review-family-violence-reforms> accessed 18 November 2024.

113 Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Legislative review of family violence information sharing and risk management: reviewing the effectiveness of Parts 5A and 11 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)*, 2023, pp. 92–95.

114 Ibid., p. 95.

An oversight mechanism has potential to support, drive and inform other Inquiry stakeholder suggestions for improvement, including by providing:

- Ongoing monitoring of service delivery, including how people move through systems and engage with services (such as the nature and extent of engagement), and the relationship between policy, prevention and service delivery.[115]

- Enhanced understanding of the impact of family violence across systems, including about key issues like misidentification and its consequences,[116] and the effectiveness of ongoing improvements.[117]

- Regular review or audit of data to identify quality improvements, whether services need additional support to collect data, and drive data comprehensiveness and accuracy.[118]

- Increased accountability and transparency for the data requested by the Victorian Government from service providers and its purpose,[119] and ensuring that the Victorian Government's responses and initiatives are transparent, regularly reviewed and data driven.[120] See Section 1.4.

- Guidance to drive strategic and holistic investment in interventions that build the evidence base over time,[121] bring research together[122] and inform a cohesive and long-term program for research, monitoring and evaluation.[123] See Part 4, Section 4.4.

Throughout its reports, the FVRIM made a number of recommendations that support improved mechanisms for capturing data on people using violence in Victoria. For example, the 2022 FVRIM report *Early intervention of family violence within universal services* proposed that the Victorian Government '[a]ctively seek frontline workforce feedback about MARAM implementation to feed into governance groups and bilateral meetings' and '[s]upport and encourage impact-focussed data collection from a range of sources, and regularly bring together quantitative data to form a coherent and meaningful view of MARAM implementation across the system'.[124]

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115   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 2.

116   Rebecca Buys, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

117   Phillip Ripper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

118   Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, received 14 June 2024, p. 6; Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, received 7 June 2024, p. 13; Dr Lance Emerson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 8; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 7.

119   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 7, 12; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 7.

120   Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 7.

121   Dr Silke Meyer, Professor of Social Work, Griffith University, public hearing, Melbourne, 29 August 2024, *additional information,* pp. 2, 5.

122   Rebecca Buys, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 50; Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 43.

123   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 2.

124   Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Key findings and suggested actions*, 10 May 2022, <https://www.fvrim.vic.gov.au/monitoring-victorias-family-violence-reforms-early-identification-family-violence-within-universal/key-findings-suggested-actions> accessed 18 November 2024.

FINDING 7: Victoria's Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, which ceased in 2023, was a nation-leading oversight mechanism and ensured accountability for reform and progress after the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

FINDING 8: An effective whole-of-system family violence oversight mechanism in Victoria would ensure systems accountability (how the family violence and different sectors operate and collaborate), and oversight of enhancements to data collection, storage, sharing, linkage, use, analysis and research in relation to people who use family violence. The mechanism could drive, inform and improve continuous reform, strategic alignment, and holistic data collection and service delivery.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Victorian Government establish an effective whole-of-system family violence oversight and continuous improvement mechanism to ensure systems accountability and oversight of enhancements to data collection, sharing, linkage, use, analysis and research in relation to people who use family violence. Once established, the mechanism should review and publicly report on the actions taken in response to Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's reports.

1.4 Greater dialogue between the Victorian Government and stakeholders on data collection priorities and usage

Service providers may not prioritise data collection if its utility is not evident.[125] If service providers and practitioners support the purpose of data collection, it makes data collection more meaningful[126] and less burdensome.[127] Service providers can be incentivised to collect and provide data if it is beneficial to their work and evident that the data contributes to prevention efforts and enhanced service provision.[128]

Increasing transparency and dialogue between the Victorian Government and service providers about why specific data is requested (the purpose), and how it will or could be used (including to inform policy or investment/funding agreements)[129] may improve understanding about the importance of data collection, as well as data integrity and

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125   Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 64.

126   Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26.

127   Kathleen Maltzahn, Chief Executive Officer, Sexual Assault Services Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6; Tom Bowerman, Acting Executive Director, Services, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 58.

128   Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 12; Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6.

129   Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 1; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, received 31 May 2024, p. 13; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 5; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 12; Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, p. 3; Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, received 17 May 2024, pp. 2–3; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 7; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 9.

completeness.[130] Greater transparency about the allocation of funding can help service providers prioritise the data collection that is required by decision-makers and seek investment in programs that meet government priorities and community need.[131]

In addition to engaging with service providers on data collection, transparency and dialogue could be increased through better engagement and relationship-building with Family Violence Regional Integration Committees (FVRICs) (see Section 1.4.1 below) or peak bodies. An effective whole-of-system oversight mechanism (Recommendation 7 above) could also have a role to play in holding the Victorian Government accountable.

Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to improve transparency and dialogue included:

- **Discuss priorities**: Increase dialogue about data collection priorities for both service providers and the Victorian Government to improve data collection practices and data collection tool design,[132] including with practitioners working with people who use family violence.[133] Create opportunities for mainstream services to work collaboratively and consistently with the family violence sector and the Victorian Government to increase understanding of the importance and presence of data gaps and benefits.[134]

- **Standardise and share purposes**: Better standardise and communicate the purpose of data collection for people who use family violence,[135] as this will lead to less disjointed profile data.[136]

- **Create clarity**: Support greater understanding for service providers by creating clarity about which systems can provide data and to where,[137] which databases collect what information and who can access them,[138] and who owns data and can use it.[139]

- **Prioritise feedback loops**: Implement feedback loops to share collected data and analysis—including on outcomes or evaluations—to service providers and different sectors in an accessible format to help inform program development and delivery, organisation knowledge, best practice,[140] and accurate identification of

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130   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 16; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 7.

131   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 18.

132   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 8; Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, p. 3.

133   Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

134   Amanda Morris, Statewide Lead, Metropolitan Sector, Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence State-wide Leadership Team, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14.

135   Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 13; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, pp. 6, 16; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 7, 12.

136   Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 13.

137   Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 6.

138   Vivienne Nguyen, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 42.

139   Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 8.

140   Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, pp. 5, 6; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, pp. 6–7; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 7; Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 19–20.

family violence.[141] Feedback loops through structured channels can also provide opportunities for service providers to give feedback on data and its utility to enable continuous improvement in data collection and sharing.[142]

- **Increase accountability**: Increase transparency of datasets so reporting, findings and outcomes can be interrogated and accountability encouraged for conclusions drawn from data.[143] This could include mandating specific timelines and accountability mechanisms for the Victorian Agency for Health Information to return data to peak bodies and agencies, and establishing structured channels for agencies to give feedback on the data and its utility.[144]

DFFH recognised that providing feedback loops about data uses and collection purposes can reduce perceptions of administrative burden for service providers, stating: 'if we can provide that [feedback loops] and work with the sector, we can go some way in improving some of the data quality and practices, even with our legacy systems' (like IRIS).[145]

To facilitate transparency and dialogue, Inquiry stakeholder suggestions included:

- **Promote and centre practice expertise**: Services and practitioners working with people who use family violence hold significant knowledge and insight into family violence and what works. The Victorian Government can prioritise partnerships and learn from these services to understand what reforms or measures will be beneficial and how to support meaningful data collection and use.[146]

- **Provide opportunities for stakeholders to meet**: Government-endorsed and orchestrated opportunities for stakeholders to come together can shift the focus to continuous improvement rather than responding to problems.[147] An annual event bringing together stakeholders for 'a focused problem-solving discussion' about family violence perpetration could provide genuine and meaningful solutions. Accountability for actioning outcomes from the event is important.[148] For example, in April 2024 the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia hosted a National Family Violence Symposium with approximately 80 stakeholders to share expertise and map solutions to key challenges.[149]

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141 Meg Bagnall, Lead AOD and Family Violence, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 32–33.

142 Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, *Submission 22*, received 30 May 2024, p. 9; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 9.

143 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 7, 13.

144 Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, *Submission 22*, p. 9.

145 Jane Hingston, Director, Perpetrator Programs and System Performance, Family Safety Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 71.

146 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 13; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24. See also Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

147 Caroline Counsel, Co-Chair of the Family Violence Working Group, Law Institute of Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7.

148 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 17.

149 Ibid., pp. 16–17; Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia, *The Court convenes national roundtable discussions on domestic and family violence*, media release, 19 April 2024.

- **Incorporate lived experience**: Roundtables with people with lived experience can inform understanding of what is happening in practice, share data collection improvement ideas and monitor data collection processes.[150] The Victim Survivor's Advisory Council provides people with lived experience of family violence a voice and places them 'at the centre of family violence reform' and service design.[151]

- **Use local councils**: Local councils can implement the Victorian Government's strategic priorities to prevent family violence due to their 'unique position to create change in prevention and reducing risks of family violence as a workplace, a service provider, a connector to local services and organisations, and community leaders and decision-maker'.[152]

- **Leverage FVRICs**: See below.

1.4.1   Leverage Family Violence Regional Integration Committees

FVRICs are area-based cross sector committees representing government and non-government agencies, family violence services, children and family services, Victoria Police, justice and legal services, housing, community and health services.[153] Depending on what organisations operate in different regions, some FVRICs have culturally and linguistically diverse and/or First Nations agencies represented on them.[154] FVRICs are represented on the Family Violence Reform Advisory Group, which provides advice to the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence and relevant government departments.[155] The Statewide Family Violence Integration Advisory Committee brings together the 13 regional FVRICs 'to identify and prioritise systemic issues occurring across the state, and to facilitate statewide representation of FVRICs in discussions with FSV, peak bodies, and other statewide forums'.[156]

As 'local system governance structures', FVRICs 'provide leadership, advocacy and specialist expertise to strengthen, integrate and improve the whole-of-system response

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150   Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, pp. 5, 9.

151   Victorian Government, *Victim Survivor's Advisory Council*, 20 February 2023, <https://www.vic.gov.au/victim-survivors-advisory-council> accessed 19 November 2024.

152   Monash City Council, *Submission 21*, received 30 May 2024, p. 4. See also Municipal Association of Victoria, *Submission 29*, received 31 May 2024, p. 1; Mitchell Shire Council, *Submission 66*, received 24 June 2024, p. 4.

153   Victorian Government, *The role of FVRICs in the service system*, 25 August 2022, <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-regional-integration-committees-guidelines/operational-guidance-family-violence-0> accessed 19 November 2024.

154   For example, Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative are represented on Central Highlands FVRIC, the Western FVRIC includes Foundation House, the Southern FVRIC includes the Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency, and Barwon FVRIC includes Meli and Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative. See Central Highlands Integrated Family Violence Committee, *About*, n.d., <https://chifvc.org.au/about> accessed 21 January 2025; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *WIFVC Members and A–Z*, n.d., <https://wifvc.org.au/wifvc-members> accessed 21 January 2025; SMA Connect, *Partnership members*, n.d., <https://smaconnect.org.au/about/about-the-southern-melbourne-family-violence-regional-integration-committee/partnership-members> accessed 21 January 2025; Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Who we are*, n.d., <https://baifvc.org.au/about> accessed 21 January 2025.

155   Victorian Government, *Family Violence Reform Advisory Group*, 22 July 2021, <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-reform-advisory-group> accessed 19 November 2024; Victorian Government, *Background to the Family Violence Regional Integration Committees (FVRICs)*, 25 August 2022, <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-regional-integration-committees-guidelines/introduction/background-family-violence> accessed 19 November 2024.

156   Victorian Government, *Background to the Family Violence Regional Integration Committees (FVRICs)*.

to family violence'.[157] At a regional level, they provide expert advice on implementing government reforms across sectors[158] and enable better collaboration by facilitating partnerships and networking to share information.[159] Strong local relationships and data systems/technology are interdependent, with relationships particularly important when IT incidents occur.[160]

FVRICs' role could be enhanced to increase transparency and dialogue between local service providers and the Victorian Government, and provide feedback and advice to an effective whole-of-system oversight mechanism such as the FVRIM.

FINDING 9: There is an opportunity to improve the quality and extent of data collected by service providers relating to people who use family violence, by increasing understanding of data collection purposes and collaboration between the Victorian Government and family violence sector, as well as incentivising data collection. Continually improving regular and structured engagement with Family Violence Regional Integration Committees, local councils and services and practitioners working with people who use family violence could help achieve this.

RECOMMENDATION 8: The Victorian Government promote and recognise the expertise of services and practitioners by working with family violence service providers and stakeholders to improve policy and reform, including as it relates to data collection on people using family violence, by:

- consulting on the best methods to increase transparency with stakeholders about what data it collects and how it is used

- providing feedback opportunities on data utility to enable continuous improvement in data collection and sharing

- increasing dialogue and collaboration about the priorities and purposes of data collection for government, peak bodies and service providers

- communicating the defined goals and purposes of data collection about people who use family violence. For example, this could include creating a people using family violence experts panel or building on the work of existing stakeholder groups, like Family Violence Regional Integration Committees, to represent service providers working with people who use family violence.

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157 Kirsten Majidi, Principal Strategic Advisor, Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59.

158 Ibid., p. 60.

159 Max Broadley, Independent Chair, Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31.

160 Elaine Williams, Principal Strategic Advisor, Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 28–29.

1.5 Measure outcomes and impacts, not just outputs

Outputs are the number of activities completed/services delivered.

Output data **cannot**:

- report on impacts of interventions/ services on the attitudes, drivers, behaviours or outcomes for people using family violence

- inform practice or provide information on how to engage with people using family violence and what works

- inform long-term understandings of protective and risk factors, impacts of services/interventions and outcomes/ needs for diverse communities

- encourage or progress innovative and creative ways of engaging with people using family violence and promising emerging practice.

Outcomes are the impacts and changes achieved by the activities completed/ services delivered.

Outcomes **can**:

- broaden understanding and provide a deeper insight into what makes services and interventions successful

- better recognise the complexity of behaviour change journeys and move beyond unrealistic expectations that completing a program will 'fix' behaviour

- help prioritise funding allocation and support effective decision-making

- help government demonstrate impact, prevention and value for money.

Source: Tracey Golder, Program Manager, Specialist Family Violence, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52; Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, received 14 June 2024, p. 10; Dr Nicola Helps, Senior Project Officer, ANROWS, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39; Jac Dwyer, Practice Development, Training and Capacity Building Projects, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, received 14 June 2024, p. 20; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, received 31 May 2024, p. 18; Dr Lance Emerson, Deputy Secretary, eHealth, Department of Health, Centre for Victorian Data Linkage, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6.

Family violence outcomes data is collected through government reporting on department performance measures and FVOF objectives, and service providers' program reporting as part of funding agreements.[161]

Evaluation and outcomes data collected on program and intervention effectiveness (including MBCPs) requires significant improvement.[162] See Part 3, *Learning what works: programs for people using family violence*.

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161   See Appendix A for two tables mapping the purpose of data collected and related frameworks that apply across relevant stakeholders for capturing data on people using family violence in Victoria.

162   Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 10; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 5.

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1.5.1 Recognise the limitations of current outputs reporting

Data collection on program outputs is well established. There are four main Victorian Government reporting requirements for service providers. All focus on outputs:

- **Performance measures**: For family violence services and programs for people who use family violence, DFFH reports on service delivery performance measures based on outputs under the Resource Management Framework.[163] Data on measures are collected manually through Service Delivery Tracking, IRIS and Homelessness Data Collection (HDC).[164] Service Delivery Tracking is a tool to help organisations provided funding to deliver services/activities to track progress towards targets.[165]

- **Program reporting/service agreements**: DFFH funds service providers and requests output program data for DFFH's program management and contract oversight.[166] Service agreements are a contract between funded organisations and departments[167] that include data collection requirements.[168] Data on program outputs are collected by service providers and shared with DFFH via an upload to systems like IRIS and HDC.[169]

- **FVOF**: The FVOF Implementation Strategy outcomes measures for people who use family violence (*Domain 3: Perpetrators*)[170] are outputs[171] collected through TOD and CSA.[172]

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163 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 6. Output reporting includes the number of workers trained in MARAM, assessments undertaken by TODs, number of cases referred to and assisted by RAMPs, number of support episodes provided to adolescents using violence in the home, number of calls responded to the statewide telephone help line for men regarding family violence, number of men participating in MBCPs, number of case management responses provided to perpetrators of family violence including those that require individualised support, number of sexual assault services provided, satisfaction of workers with FVISS and MARAM training, satisfaction of TOD clients. See Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Annual report 2022–23*, 2023, pp. 54–55.

164 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 6.

165 Victorian Government, *Service Delivery Tracking*, 1 November 2023, <https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/service-delivery-tracking> accessed 20 November 2024.

166 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 11; Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59. Output data focuses on service hours and targets, referral sources/referrals made, client demographics, case details and outcome and waitlist data, see also Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 10; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 19; No to Violence, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 10 September 2024, p. 2; Darrylin Galanos, Acting Manager, Client Analytics and Reporting, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48; Dr Lance Emerson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6.

167 Victorian Government, *Service agreement*, 29 August 2024, <https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/service-agreement> accessed 20 November 2024.

168 See for example, schedule 2 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Service Agreement sample 2024–2028*, 2024.

169 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 11.

170 State of Victoria, *Family Violence Outcomes Framework Measurement and Monitoring Implementation Strategy*, p. 23.

171 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 6. Output reporting includes the number/proportion of reported contraventions of FVIOs, and the number/proportion of individuals identified as the 'primary aggressor' in an L17 report who receive a subsequent L17 report (within 12 months).

172 Ibid., p. 9.

- **Dhelk Dja**: The *Dhelk Dja Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan* outcomes indicators focus on increases in participation and compliance rates.[173] Data on measures are collected from program management data and CSA.[174]

Output data justifies the quantity of services delivered and acquits funding agreement obligations.[175] It can risk service providers focusing on placing people in programs to secure funding.[176] Only collecting data from service providers through contract arrangements means there are limited avenues for service providers to supply the wealth of data they hold to the Victorian Government.[177] While information on demographics and service delivery is provided as part of contract requirements, this data (and MARAM data) can be better used to understand cohorts and tailor prevention and intervention strategies.[178] This data should be nuanced and contextualised. See Section 1.2.

DFFH recognised the 'gap between the data [it] currently collect[s] for performance reporting and program management, and the data needed to measure outcomes and demonstrate program effectiveness over time' and there is 'much room for improvement' in reporting beyond only administrative data.[179]

> **FINDING 10:** Data currently collected by the Victorian Government for performance measures and program reporting for family violence services and programs for people who use family violence does not measure outcomes or demonstrate service and program effectiveness over time.

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173 Under the 'Aboriginal people who use family violence are held accountable for and change their behaviour through engagement in safe, culture and trauma informed services' outcome, the indicators are an increase in participation rates for Aboriginal people who use family violence in behaviour change programs; an increase in behaviour change programs that are culture and trauma informed; and an increase in the rate of compliance with statutory orders by Aboriginal people. See ibid.

174 Ibid.

175 Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 10; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 19; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 4; Tracey Golder, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52.

176 Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39.

177 Fiona Dowsley, Chief Statistician, Crime Statistics Agency, public hearing, Melbourne, 22 July 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 13.

178 Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59.

179 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 14.

1.5.2 Measure outcomes and impacts to broaden understanding

Performance measures, program reporting and FVOF data should focus on outcomes and impacts.[180] Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to develop improved outcomes data included:

- **Improve outcome design**: Co-design and collaborate with service providers and the family violence sector on meaningful outcomes to measure and centre practice expertise (this also applies to reporting/service agreement data, see below).[181] Measure impacts of programs and services through both qualitative and quantitative data.[182] Embed outcomes and evaluation measures into data systems.[183] Conduct independent evaluations before deciding to change, expand or discontinue programs.[184]

- **Increase capability to measure outcomes**: Upskill service providers and practitioners and increase capacity and capability to measure outcomes and impacts.[185]

- **Publicly acknowledge limitations**: Publicly note when reporting on people using family violence that current data is limited and not representative and avoid using this data to plan programs.[186] For example, in reporting on the measure '[n]umber of males and females identified as the respondent in an L17 report who receive a subsequent L17 report within 12 months' in the *Ending family violence annual report 2022* '[t]he Victorian Government recognises the number of female respondents may be inflated in this data due to misidentification of the predominant aggressor'.[187]

> **FINDING 11:** Performance measures, program reporting and the Family Violence Outcomes Framework should use data to measure outcomes and impacts to provide a deeper insight into what makes services and interventions successful, better recognise the complexity of behaviour change journeys, support effective decision-making and funding priorities, and help demonstrate impact, prevention and value for money.

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180   Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 10; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 2; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, pp. 4, 19–20; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 4; No to Violence, response to questions on notice, p. 2; Darrylin Galanos, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 65; Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12.

181   Thorne Harbour Health, Submission 39, received 31 May 2024, p. 4; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 20; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 12–13.

182   Jessica Seamer, PhD Candidate, Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 10–11; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 7.

183   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 7.

184   Ibid., p. 3.

185   Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 10; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 7; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 20.

186   Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, pp. 6, 15.

187   Department of Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Ending family violence: annual report 2022*, p. 47.

FINDING 12: Performance measures, program reporting and the Family Violence Outcomes Framework should be co-designed with the family violence sector, centre practice expertise and measure impacts through qualitative and quantitative data, and be accompanied by upskilling for service providers and practitioners to measure outcomes and impacts.

Improved program reporting/service agreement data

Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to improve program reporting data included:

- **Streamline requirements**: Streamline or simplify data reporting requirements for funding agreements[188] and across funding streams.[189] It could include establishing a standard for government departments that service providers only provide information once to avoid double entry across platforms.[190] Build consistent monitoring and evaluation strategies into programs from their inception[191] that capture longitudinal data and monitor change over time.[192] See Part 4, Section 4.1.3.

- **Combine data/reporting requirements with funding agreements**: Incorporate mandatory and consistent data collection, reporting and evaluation requirements into grant and funding agreements for consistent and efficient data collection.[193] It could include improving database flexibility to reduce duplication in service providers reporting on funding obligations.[194] Contract renewals could be used to progress towards meaningful measures.[195]

- **Improve reporting requirement flexibility**: Allow flexibility in funding and reporting requirements to encourage innovative ways of engaging with people who use family violence,[196] minimise the imposition on service providers[197] and support meaningful data collection and use.[198]

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188 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 6; Cafs Ballarat, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 13 September 2024, p. 2; Patrick Cook, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 10; Rachael Pliner, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 10.

189 Rachael Pliner, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6; Patrick Cook, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 10.

190 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 7.

191 The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 3.

192 Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information,* p. 2; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Tom Bowerman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 56.

193 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, pp. 7, 23.

194 The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 7.

195 Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14.

196 Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39.

197 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 7, 12.

198 Ibid., p. 13.

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- **Improve funding transparency and design**: Create transparency on funding allocations to ensure service providers can effectively seek investment in programs and demonstrate outcomes achievements.[199] Fund interventions holistically by attaching evaluation funding to program funding.[200] Consider updating funding agreements to allow data collection in formats or methods that support research.[201]

- **Improve capacity to report**: Resource service providers to report on data that informs policy responses and service design[202] and to measure outcomes over time,[203] including when trialling new approaches to data collection.[204]

> **FINDING 13:** Reporting requirements for family violence programs and services could be improved to support more meaningful data collection and use, and to enhance the Victorian Government's ability to capture longitudinal data about people using family violence, including monitoring change over time.

> **RECOMMENDATION 9:** The Victorian Government improve and prioritise family violence program and service agreement reporting by:
>
> - streamlining grant and funding agreement requirements (with particular focus given to any new programs)
>
> - allowing data collection in formats that support research
>
> - building consistent monitoring evaluation strategies into programs
>
> - encouraging innovation and flexibility among service providers in the ways they report.

Improved long-term outcomes under the Family Violence Outcomes Framework

The FVOF Implementation Strategy has one outcome, two indicators and two output measures under *Domain 3: Perpetrators*.[205] Data on these are limited.[206] FSV initiated a data linkage project through CVDL on FVOF outcomes reporting and is planning to test the measures proposed in the project now that TOD data is available. This 'may lead to better monitoring of perpetrator outcomes for policy making purposes'.[207]

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199   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 18.

200   Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information,* p. 2.

201   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 1.

202   Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 3; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 13; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 7.

203   Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information,* p. 2; Sameera Fieldgrass, Practice Lader, Sector and Community Partnerships, Centre for Multicultural Youth, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48; Vivienne Nguyen, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

204   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 13.

205   State of Victoria, *Family Violence Outcomes Framework Measurement and Monitoring Implementation Strategy*, p. 23.

206   Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 14–15.

207   Centre for Victorian Data Linkage, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 9 September 2024, p. 2.

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While there is no 'silver bullet' for meaningful outcomes measures,[208] Inquiry stakeholder suggestions included:

- **Improve design**: Develop an outcomes framework that clearly articulates what is to be achieved and demonstrates cost effectiveness.[209] Include outcomes measures on changes in behaviours and attitudes,[210] confidence in and experiences of the system,[211] harm minimisation and help-seeking behaviours,[212] taking accountability,[213] the safety and wellbeing of victim survivors,[214] the impacts of public awareness and education campaigns on people who use family violence,[215] for people who use family violence who do not encounter the justice system[216] and that better measure demand for services.[217]

- **Improve alignment**: Align FVOF outcomes and service agreement outcomes.[218] Align FVOF outcomes and national outcomes where possible,[219] but prioritise what is possible at a state level.[220]

- **Improve data quality**: Examine data quality, rigour and accuracy when determining data to use for outcomes to ensure what is used is accurate and meaningful, for example, recognising police data is impacted by misidentification, so provides a partial picture.[221]

- **Consider perpetrator interventions outcomes framework**: Consider a separate outcomes framework for perpetrator interventions that feeds into the FVOF.[222] See Part 3, *Leaning what works: programs for people using family violence*.

DFFH noted work to develop outcomes and indicators under the FVOF *Domain 3: Perpetrators* is 'ongoing'[223] and it has 'commenced work to strengthen how progress towards these outcomes could be measured over time and the impact of Victoria's reform monitored and further improved'.[224] The *Ending family violence: annual report 2022* also acknowledges that measures are limited and do not provide insights into

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208 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 12.

209 Phillip Ripper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 47.

210 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 20; Olsen Clark, Policy and Advocacy Advisor, No to Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

211 Dr Amy Webster, Policy, Advocacy and Research Manager, Sexual Assault Services Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9.

212 Olsen Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

213 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 20.

214 Ibid.; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, received 31 May 2024, p. 18; Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 4; Olsen Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51. Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information,* p. 2.

215 National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, received 30 May 2024, p. 2.

216 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 6.

217 Patrick Cook, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 10.

218 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 21.

219 Amanda Alford, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 14, 15.

220 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 12.

221 Ibid.

222 No to Violence, response to questions on notice, p. 1.

223 Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 72.

224 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 9.

perpetrators' accountability, and that significant data gaps require ongoing work to address.[225] The third rolling action plan under the *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's 10-Year Plan for Change*, expected in 2025, will include understanding and measuring the impact of family violence reforms as a priority area.[226]

> **FINDING 14:** The Victorian Government acknowledges that current measures to assess the impacts of family violence reforms are limited, and do not provide insights into perpetrators' accountability. The Government continues to work to improve outcomes and indicators for *Domain 3: Perpetrators (Perpetrators are held accountable, connected and take responsibility for stopping their violence)* under the Family Violence Outcomes Framework and strengthen how progress is measured over time.

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225 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Ending family violence: annual report 2022*, p. 46.

226 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 14; Family Safety Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, correspondence, 31 December 2024.

Part 2
How to improve current data processes

2

What the Committee heard

Part 2 | How to improve current data processes

2

A woman has been assaulted. She goes to the hospital—her data is collected. She goes to a domestic violence service—her data is collected. She goes to Centrelink—her data is collected. Where is his data being collected in all this? Nowhere. We need to flip that somehow.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance

... there is a huge opportunity to digitise the processes. You then start capturing the data from the start in a way that is a lot more usable. We can interrogate it, we can use it and we can share it in a more insightful way. So I do not think it is more data; it is a more clever way of how you capture and use the data.

inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence

It is really important that we have the different points of the system speaking to each other. We need our domestic and family violence services, early intervention, response—their data collection—to be speaking to sexual assault services, response and early intervention. But also our general services—how can we connect up data from health services, from police, from the many different places in which victim survivors seek support? But again, we know that those existing points of the system will tell us far more about victimisation than they will about perpetration. Again there is that challenge that so often perpetrators are not acutely in the view of the system in the way that victim-survivors are ...

Respect Victoria

... the family violence service sector ... is a more challenging data story because it is very splintered and fragmented. There are many smaller agencies that provide specific services or programs, and these agencies may collect data about perpetrators either in their direct service provision to them or in support of victim-survivors or other impacted family members. Unless these services contribute their service data to the main social services datasets, their interactions may not be captured or may not be captured to the same level of detail.

Crime Statistics Agency

... the more information we can gather, learn and share about a perpetrator, the stronger our understanding on how to manage the risk that he presents with, becomes. By creating a system that tracks the course of a perpetrator throughout multiple services (statutory and non-statutory) and that provides instruction on his services system engagement, his tactics of violence and intelligence from his current and former partners, we hold a greater potential to reduce risk to those who have been or who are subject to his use of violence.

Meli

... the shared understanding of family violence ... is crucial, particularly with the non-family violence specialist sectors, so the universal service system, community health, health systems, alcohol and other drug services, mental health services and homelessness services. They are all interacting with people who use violence and without a shared understanding of family violence that is able to capture that information in a way that can then be easily shared.

Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership

... having very strong data definitions and processes that standardise data collection, which can standardise those data assets to enable comparability, is really important.

Victorian Department of Health, Centre for Victorian Data Linkage

Where data on people who use family violence is gathered from service providers, it is noted to be limited, inconsistently collected and with different definitions, making it difficult to aggregate and compare.

Australian Community Support Organisation

... everyone is collecting a form of data. The challenge is that it sits siloed, so some sits under the Department of Health, some sits under the Department of Education, some sits with justice, some sits with DFFH. This big picture is just not linked or connected. Everyone is tracking data, but everyone is using different systems, different platforms and has different reporting requirements.

Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee

You have got to imagine it: there are 39 questions to the [L17] police report. When the MARAM was developed, they went with a professional structured judgement and assessment. Now, that takes several hours to undertake. The police report is designed for what is practical for a police officer in the field at the time, out at a scene. There is a lot of information in there, but we are always open to refining it. It has been through a process of being refined since its introduction back in 2005. There is always room to improve its data collection, and I acknowledge that there are aspects of the data that probably do not provide a full picture on perpetrators, but it was built fit for purpose for a police officer and what you could reasonably ask of both the [affected family member] and the perpetrator at a scene.

Victoria Police

... different agencies use various definitions and methods of recording and reporting family violence, leading to inconsistencies in data. This lack of standardisation complicates efforts to analyse and compare data, affecting the development of a unified understanding of the issue. For a more accurate picture agencies need to adopt consistent data collection protocols and definitions, which should include considerations for all genders and various forms of violence ... developing and implementing standardised tools and protocols across agencies is essential for enhancing data collection.

Family Safety and Child Wellbeing, Child and Family Services Ballarat

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> " The flow on impacts for people misidentified as using family violence can be devastating, including higher risk of ongoing violence, forced separation of families, reduced access to family violence services, criminalisation, and homelessness. These impacts are particularly acute for Aboriginal women, migrant and refugee women, women in the criminal legal system, women with disabilities and people who identify as [LGBTIQA+], who are at greater risk of being misidentified, and face structural barriers to accessing justice.

Federation of Victorian Community Legal Centres

> " Current data on perpetration may be misleading or incomplete, given the prevalence of police misidentifying women … In our practice experience, we regularly see people who are unsafe and in need of protection being misidentified by police. This can have far-reaching and intersecting impacts on people's lives and other legal issues, like child protection or family law.

Victoria Legal Aid

> " The fragmented nature of data systems limits the ability to use perpetrator data to inform risk assessments and entrenches systemic issues such as misidentification of the primary aggressor. The Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's (FVRIM) report on predominant aggressor found that misidentification is a significant issue. [InTouch] Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence estimated that at least one third of their clients had been mis-identified as perpetrators at some point in their engagement with law enforcement and the justice system.

Safe and Equal

Victoria Police acknowledges that perpetrators of family violence can utilise the courts and the criminal justice system to further perpetrate abuse and that this may lead to victim-survivors of family violence being falsely identified as perpetrators. As first responders in the family violence system we acknowledge and accept Victoria Police's important role in responding to this issue and are committed to tackling this problem. It is also important to note that accurate identification of the predominant aggressor can be a complex matter. We must also bear in mind that police attend incidents where both parties have committed family violence and that police must report the facts and the evidence before them when responding to an incident, as it is often through accurate reporting of family violence incidents over time that a clearer picture of the nature and the dynamic of family violence will emerge.

Victoria Police

The [Specialist Family Violence Advisor] roles have been essential in achieving positive outcomes in [domestic, family and sexual violence] reform to date. They are integral in developing cross sectoral relationships that can enable best practice across sectors.

Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association

Setting up agreements or codes of practice with private services can lead to improved data collection which could inform changes to reporting requirements. This could also identify people who use [domestic, family and sexual violence] in the community that have previously been hidden from systems.

ANROWS

We look at the family violence data framework and increasing those requirements for the places where people do present, such as hospitals, banks. It is these sorts of holistic services where people—the professionals may not recognise it, but that is where you are seeing the signs of elder abuse, whether it is financial abuse, whether it could be physical abuse, whether it could be mental abuse. It is looking at it more holistically because people are not just going to present to Orange Doors or explicitly family violence coded locations.

Council of the Ageing (COTA) Victoria

It is hard to make MARAM assessment tools 'living' documents or dynamic assessments because they cannot be added to easily. Practitioners often need to copy and paste between assessments or complete a new assessment tool as they are unable to update the initial assessment because services' CMS are not integrated. This impacts the quality of risk assessment information. Risk assessment reflects a point in time and it would assist to assess dynamic risks if the ability to easily update assessments existed. Services using the same software would assist.

Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership

Strengthening pro-active and timely information sharing through improved data management practices can assist with the prevention of further family violence from occurring and escalating. Ensuring that services are equipped with the systems, capacity and capabilities to facilitate real time data use and sharing will have a significant impact on improving our response to family violence.

inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence

There is sometimes limited and disparate functionality within and across program or service level databases to extract or analyse de-identified datasets that can assist identifying and understanding trends in family violence perpetration. Investment is required to upgrade databases with these functions to improve the insights that can be gleaned from existing service level and cross sector data sets.

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand

So one service might only use IRIS. If a service is just being funded for a perpetrator program, they will use IRIS. If they are being funded for perpetrators and for family violence services, they might use SHIP and IRIS. With the perpetrator program, they will have a family safety support worker working with the partner to the man who is in the program, or hopefully if she is willing to end that, information related to her might also be in SHIP. This is also where you can have the same information going into multiple data systems and it might not be consistent in the way it is put in because the data fields are different … but they could have people in all of those data systems or with the same information duplicated or they could be related to separate incidents. It is very complicated.

University of Melbourne, Department of Social Work

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You might have a perpetrator who is ... receiving alcohol and other drug support through an AOD agency; they may also be connected in mental health and they may also be connected with the men's service. The person using violence has multiple connection points. So too does the person experiencing violence, the victim-survivor. They may be connecting with a victim-survivor service and there may be child and family involved that is working with the whole of family, so all of these sectors are so intertwined and connected.

Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee

Access to CIP data must be broadened. As was originally planned with MARAM, all tier 1 organisations, holistic specialist family violence services like Djirra, should have direct access to the CIP.

Djirra

It is important that our [Specialist Family Violence] Case Managers are aware of what supports the [person using family violence] PUV is engaged with, and whether they are making progress towards behavioural change. Providing more linkages between victim-survivors' case management support and the PUV's case management support (if engaged) would ensure the risk assessment and case progress is more transparent.

Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights

The information sharing processes available through RAMP engagement would be of immense benefit to a wider cohort of family violence cases, not just those deemed to be highest risk.

MacKillop Family Services

When a perpetrator crosses the George Chaffey Bridge, our services have a limited ability to gather risk relevant information from our New South Wales colleagues. New South Wales police and family violence services are governed by the *Crime (Domestic and Personal Violence) Act 2007.* While part 13A allows for perpetrator information to be shared across state borders in certain situations, frequently service providers are either unaware of these provisions or do not feel comfortable to share the same levels of detail that we enjoy in Victoria. This has had, and will likely continue to have, a negative impact on client outcomes.

Mallee Accommodation and Support Program

A related challenge is the lack of agreed national family violence definitions that are consistently applied across services and agencies across this area. This results in different understandings of what is family violence, and subsequently what is criminalised and required to be shared. This can result in jurisdictional issues with data sharing.

Centre for Multicultural Youth

Part 2 | How to improve current data processes

For the most part, current data on people using family violence is collected from victim survivors in contact with services, or police for the purpose of managing immediate risk and service delivery. For example, data is collected by services to complete a risk assessment through the MARAM Framework[1] or through L17 police referrals.[2] Collection and sharing of this data under FVISS, CISS and CIP has delivered positive impacts, but continuous improvement processes are needed to:

- increase consistency and accuracy in data collection

- extend collaboration and information sharing

- explore opportunities to collect and use more information from, and about, people using family violence.

2.1   Improve family violence data collection, consistency and accuracy

Consistent, accurate, comprehensive and reliable data can help to build a fuller picture of people who use family violence,[3] and the extent, trends, risks and patterns of family violence.[4] Government, peak organisations and service providers each have a role to play in strengthening the quality of comparable data on people using family violence, and increase the ability to understand, measure and monitor the nature and extent of family violence across systems.[5] Standardisation and alignment (including with other jurisdictions, see Section 2.6) would also enable more data sources to be linked to answer questions about family violence[6] (see Part 4, Section 4.1.5).

The importance of having a skilled, capable and diverse family violence and broader workforce,[7] and its role in collecting and using data about people using family violence

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1   See Background, *Measure outcomes and impacts, not just outputs* for a detailed description of MARAM and Part 2, Section 2.1.1. See also the MARAM Adult Screening and Identification Tool that is used by some services to screen for family violence to identify and record information about evidence-based family violence risk factors. Victorian Government, *Responsibility 2: Appendix 3 adult screening and identification tool*, (n.d.), <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-10/Responsibility%202-%20Appendix%203%20-%20Adult%20Screening%20Tool.docx> accessed 27 February 2025.

2   See Part 2, Section 2.1.4.

3   Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, received 31 May 2024, p. 2; Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 45*, received 31 May 2024, p. 8; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, received 31 May 2024, p. 2.

4   ANROWS, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to written questions on notice received 9 October 2024, p. 4.

5   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3.

6   Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, received 5 June 2024, p. 6; Dr Jozica Kutin, General Manager, Advocacy and Service Impact, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 66; Dr Lance Emerson, Deputy Secretary, eHealth, Department of Health, Centre for Victorian Data Linkage, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4.

7   State of Victoria, *Family Violence Outcomes Framework Measurement and Monitoring Implementation Strategy*, report prepared by Department of Premier and Cabinet, 2020, p. 13.

is recognised by the Victorian Government.[8] The Government also recognises the importance of not creating an additional administrative burden for this workforce.[9]

2.1.1 Standardise MARAM and data collection practices

Victoria's MARAM Framework, as a defined and systematic approach, is fundamental to consistent and accurate data collection and sharing about people who use family violence.[10] FSV oversees the strategic implementation of MARAM, resources and training, and MARAM implementation for DFFH-funded workforces (including the family violence sector). Other departments and agencies ensure their workforces align with MARAM and adapt relevant policies and approaches.[11] For a description of available information sharing and MARAM training, see the Victorian Government's website[12] and MARAM and Information Sharing quarterly newsletters.[13]

Inconsistent MARAM application and data collection across Victoria[14] means MARAM alignment is an ongoing process, requiring training and support for various workforces.[15] Building on available MARAM support and training,[16] Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to improve data on people using family violence collected under MARAM included:

- Support workforces to increase their confidence in applying MARAM,[17] provide more support on interpreting or using MARAM data,[18] resource service providers

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8   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Strong Foundations: Building on Victoria's work to end family violence*, 2023, p. 48; Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, received 17 July 2024, pp. 1, 14.

9   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Strong Foundations*, p. 48.

10   Bernadette McCartney, Executive Director, Services, Meli, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Lisa Robinson, Director, Family Safety and Therapeutic Serivces, Meli, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Kristy Berryman, Manager Family Violence, Meli, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Sharan Ermel, Statewide Lead, Regional Sector, Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence State-wide Leadership Team, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12; Tarryn Chapman, Acting Principal Strategic Advisor, Western Integrated Famiy Violence Committee, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 20 August 2024, p. 1; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, received 31 May 2024, p. 8.

11   Amber Griffiths, Executive Director, Family and Sexual Violence Programs, Family Safety Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 68.

12   Victorian Government, *Training for the information sharing and MARAM reforms*, 18 November 2024, <https://www.vic.gov.au/training-for-information-sharing-and-maram> accessed 21 November 2024.

13   Victorian Government, *MARAM and Information Sharing quarterly newsletters*, 4 September 2024, <https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-and-information-sharing-quarterly-newsletter> accessed 21 November 2024.

14   Kristy Berryman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Lisa Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27.

15   Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 72.

16   Elena Campbell, Associate Director, Research, Advocacy and Policy, Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3. For an explanation of existing MARAM support and training, see Victorian Government, *Training for the information sharing and MARAM reforms*; Victorian Government, *MARAM and Information Sharing quarterly newsletters*.

17   Kristy Berryman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, received 31 May 2024, p. 5.

18   Berry Street, *Submission 31*, pp. 5, 14; Jac Dwyer, Practice Development, Training and Capacity Building Projects, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

to embed or align with MARAM[19] and improve understanding of MARAM responsibilities.[20]

- Ensure MARAM risk assessments are not completed in a 'tick box fashion' and instead use investigative techniques rather than questions with yes/no answers, because '[t]he data inputted is only as good as the questions … asked'.[21] For example, in response to the risk assessment question, 'Has anyone in your family done something that made you or your children feel unsafe or afraid?' the person asking the questions may tick yes/no and may provide comments.[22]

- Demonstrate to service providers that there are wider opportunities to use MARAM data (for example, it can provide a clearer picture of service delivery) to encourage investment or prioritisation of collecting MARAM data.[23]

- Provide more training on embedding MARAM[24] (see Section 2.1.2 on workforce development).

The MARAM Framework 5-year Evidence Review (conducted from November 2022 to November 2023) similarly reported that stakeholders found:

- low familiarity with practice guides and that important information was lost due to the number, length and difficulty of navigating resources[25]

- that risk assessment tools were used in a 'tick box fashion' rather than information being collected in a conversational/narrative style[26] and tools did not address diverse and intersecting needs[27]

- MARAM did not adequately cover all forms of family violence like coercive control and technology-facilitated abuse,[28] and too heavily focused on family violence in heterosexual intimate partner relationships[29]

- many practitioners were reluctant to engage directly with children[30] (see Part 3, Section 3.5).

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19   Jac Dwyer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 50; Christine Robinson, Principal Strategic Advisor, Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61; Kirsten Majidi, Principal Strategic Advisor, Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61; Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 1.

20   Bec Wilkin, Acting Executive Manager Client Services, The Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 51–52.

21   Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 63–64.

22   Victorian Government, *Responsibility 2: Appendix 3 adult screening and identification tool*, p. 7.

23   Livia La Rocca, General Manager Intergrated Place-Based Services, Vic East and NSW, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 65.

24   Berry Street, *Submission 31*, pp. 5, 14; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 2, 3, 9.

25   Allen + Clarke Consulting, *Victorian Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework 5-year Evidence Review: Summary report*, report for Family Safety Victoria, 2023, p. 12.

26   Ibid., p. 13.

27   This included for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; migrants, refugees and people who are culturally and linguistically diverse; people with disability; LGBTIQA+ individuals; people with a mental illness; older people; women in pregnancy and early motherhood; people in regional, rural and remote areas; and young women. Ibid., p. 15.

28   Ibid., p. 13.

29   Ibid., p. 12.

30   Ibid., p. 16.

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Recommendations included updating MARAM to reflect evidence on conceptualisations of family violence and risk (for example, revising perpetrator terminology or emerging behaviours of coercive control) and supporting 'system-wide consistent practice and alignment by enhancing and elevating' guidance on MARAM responsibilities and applicability, and 'enhancing the usability and accessibility of MARAM'.[31]

The 2023 FVRIM *Legislative review of family violence information sharing and risk management*[32] found:

- a lack of clarity about how organisations can align policies, procedures, practice guidance and tools with MARAM—recommending 'the steps and activities that framework organisations must take to align with MARAM' be set out more clearly

- MARAM 'has supported a shared language for family violence', 'a focus on keeping perpetrators in view' and 'where services align with MARAM … greater consistency in risk identification, assessment and management'. However, 'inconsistent alignment' and a lack of progress on alignment 'is limiting overall effectiveness'— recommending the introduction of 'a timeline for alignment activities'

- MARAM 'annual reporting in its current form does not provide meaningful information or accountability for framework organisations' alignment with MARAM'—recommending the Family Violence Protection Regulations 2008 be amended 'to require annual reporting about framework organisations' progress against key alignment steps, activities and timeframes'.[33]

The Victorian Government response (January 2023) to the MARAM Framework 5-year Evidence Review accepted the recommendations, but did not explain how these would be addressed.[34] The Victorian Government response (August 2023) to the FVRIM review outlined it will 'work to prepare high-level descriptors' of alignment responsibilities to include as a *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) (FVP Act) schedule and continue developing a MARAM maturity model.[35] The maturity model aims to help organisations align to MARAM and includes 'indicative timeframes for completion of alignment steps and activities' which, once finalised, will 'support the basis of future reporting requirements by relevant portfolio ministers' on MARAM alignment 'for the MARAM annual report'. Consideration will then be given to

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31   Ibid., p. 20.

32   *The Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) requires that independent reviews of Parts 5A and 11 be conducted for the first two and five years of FVISS's operation. The FVRIM report is the five-year review, which focused on the legal framework but not implementation. Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Legislative review of family violence information sharing and risk management: reviewing the effectiveness of Parts 5A and 11 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)*, 2023, p. 1.

33   Ibid., pp. 4–5, 6. See Part 1, *Victoria's approach to ending family violence* (Figure). See also State of Victoria and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Annual report on the implementation of the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework 2022–23*, 2024.

34   Government response available here, Victorian Government, *MARAM Framework 5-year Evidence Review*, 12 April 2024, <https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-framework-5-year-evidence-review> accessed 21 November 2024.

35   FSV 'will test and finalise the resources with department and sector stakeholders before reflecting updates and fully implementing the model in 2024–25'. See State of Victoria and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Annual report on the implementation of the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework 2022–23*, p. 23.

'amending regulations to include reporting requirements for portfolio ministers against the maturity model'.[36]

DFFH advised enhanced accessibility of MARAM practice guides would be explored in 2025, subject to budget considerations.[37] FSV advised its focus in response to the MARAM review is on embedding MARAM in prescribed organisations.[38] Publicly reporting against the implementation of both reports' recommendations would be beneficial, for example, in DFFH's annual reports, the Ending family violence annual reports[39] or the MARAM annual reports.[40]

While MARAM, FVISS and CISS training, fact sheets, webinars and a maturity model are available,[41] it is unclear to what extent MARAM capability-building and upskilling initiatives are driving improved data collection.[42] It may be assumed that services like AOD, mental health, homelessness or youth services experience MARAM capability uplift, but in reality practitioners' capacity to engage in training may have been limited, resulting in a lack of confidence to apply MARAM.[43]

FINDING 15: Victoria's Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) is the foundation of consistent and accurate data collection about people who use family violence. Continuing to enhance and promote existing MARAM training, resources and tools to support service providers to embed MARAM and improve understanding of MARAM responsibilities will help improve the collection of data about people using family violence.

RECOMMENDATION 10: The Victorian Government:

- continue to enhance and promote training, resources and tools to help service providers embed the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) and improve understanding of MARAM responsibilities, including to improve the collection of data about people using family violence

- report publicly on actions taken in response to the *MARAM Framework 5-year Evidence Review* and the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's *Legislative review of family violence information sharing and risk management* (2023).

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36   Victorian Government, *Government Response: Legislative review of Parts 5A and 11 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)*, 2023, pp. 13–14.

37   Family Safety Victoria, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 11 September 2024, p. 4.

38   Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 69.

39   This reports on FVOF progress and rolling action plan activities. Victorian Government, *Ending family violence: annual reports*, 29 December 2023, <https://www.vic.gov.au/ending-family-violence-annual-reports> accessed 8 April 2024.

40   This report describes the key areas of progress and work undertaken to align MARAM across departments, organisations and agencies. Victorian Government, *MARAM annual reports*, 27 March 2024, <https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-annual-reports> accessed 22 November 2024.

41   Victorian Government, *Training for the information sharing and MARAM reforms*; Victorian Government, *MARAM and Information Sharing quarterly newsletters*.

42   Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, received 23 June 2024, p. 6.

43   Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 2 September 2024, p. 1.

Inquiry stakeholders suggested a number of practical solutions to promote consistent and accurate data collection:

- **Provide better standardised guidance**: Improve and standardise data collection practices, methods, tools, templates and standards.[44] Provide standardised guidance on the information service providers should record, store and report on, including guidance on safety, anonymity and de-identification,[45] noting this will depend on the specific purpose for which the data is being collected and used (see Appendix A). Standardise more nuanced data collection (for example, on how and why family violence occurred)[46] and implement a clear framework on writing case notes.[47]

- **Promote consistency**: Promote consistent use of terminology and definitions,[48] for example, regarding young people's use of family violence,[49] disability[50] and relationship categories,[51] including LGBTIQA+ relationships.[52] Create a consistent definition of when and how someone is counted in data as a perpetrator of family violence.[53]

- **Implement more accessible data collection techniques**: Implementing techniques for more accessible and inclusive data collection (for example, using plain and easy English, hearing loops or accessible documents).[54]

- **Improve understanding**: Ensure everyone who collects, enters and analyses data understands data points (for example, if an answer box to a question says 'unknown', is it selected because the practitioner did not ask the question or because the practitioner asked the question, and the person did not know the answer).[55]

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44   Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, received 14 June 2024, pp. 5–6; Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, received 31 May 2024, p. 5; National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, received 30 May 2024, p. 3; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, received 16 August 2024, p. 7; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 14; Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, received 7 June 2024, p. 13; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3; Dr Kristin Diemer, Principal Research Fellow, The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, public hearing, Melbourne, 22 July 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28; Dom Ennis, Acting Chief Executive Officer, YSAS, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36; Dr Lance Emerson, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 4, 8; Ella Mackay, Manager Family Safety and Child Wellbeing, Cafs Ballarat, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 27, 28.

45   Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 45*, pp. 8, 10.

46   Rasha Abbas, Chief Executive Officer, inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 43.

47   Tracey Golder, Program Manager, Specialist Family Violence, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 56.

48   Vivienne Nguyen, Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 42; Caroline Counsel, Co-Chair of the Family Violence Working Group, Law Institute of Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 10; Wendy Anders, Chief Executive Officer, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 14–15; Dr Lance Emerson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 27, 28.

49   YSAS, *Submission 9*, received 28 May 2024, p. 9; Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7.

50   Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, *Submission 36*, received 31 May 2024, p. 4.

51   Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29.

52   Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 2.

53   Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, received 31 May 2024, p. 10.

54   Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 2.

55   Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 64.

A key recommendation made by Inquiry stakeholders was to consider implementing or trialling a minimum or standard dataset collected by government from service providers working with people who use family violence, including agencies like Victoria Police. This would outline the core data included in every data system for people who use family violence,[56] for example, requiring data collection on both sex and gender,[57] and intersectional factors.[58] Minimum datasets, MBCPs, could numerically record (for example, through checkboxes) data (including data collected through conversations) to improve analysis of data over time.[59] A good example of how minimum datasets can help provide information to improve service planning and coordination, policy formulation and evaluation, as well as research, is the current Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset.[60]

If trialled, a minimum dataset should prioritise meaningful data rather than quantity of data (see Part 1, Section 1.5 on outcomes data). It should centre Indigenous Data Sovereignty (see Part 1, *Prioritise Indigenous Data Sovereignty*), privacy, and collaborative data governance and analysis to coordinate data collection, reduce silos and continuously improve data integrity and security.[61] This dataset should be audited regularly to identify improvement areas.[62] Standardising health sector datasets on people who use family violence in a similar way could also be considered.[63]

DFFH recognised '[i]mproving clarity of data definitions, data input requirements and training can all contribute to better quality data within systems'.[64] This should not create an additional administrative burden and DFFH advised it will continue to 'find the right balance to support data quality and completeness' by working with service providers.[65]

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56 FVREE, *Submission 37*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 3; YSAS, *Submission 9*, p. 7; Karen Todd, Barwon Health Representative, Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 13.

57 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 14; Dom Ennis, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

58 Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, received 14 June 2024, p. 6. See Abbreviations and key terms for a definition of intersectionality.

59 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 21.

60 This 'comprises de-identified demographic, administrative and clinical data detailing presentations at Victorian public hospitals with designated emergency departments'. Department of Health, *Victorian Emergency Minimum Dataset (VEMD)*, 6 September 2024, <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/data-reporting/victorian-emergency-minimum-dataset-vemd> accessed 21 November 2024.

61 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 13; Dataversity, *Collaborative Data Governance: The Next Evolutionary Approach*, n.d., <https://content.dataversity.net/DataGalaxyQ32023WP300_DownloadWP.html> accessed 2 December 2024.

62 Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 6.

63 Peninsula Health, *Submission 32*, received 31 May 2024, p. 2.

64 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 12.

65 Ibid., pp. 12–13.

Some stakeholders identified service providers need dedicated resourcing to improve the collection of accurate, current and reliable data,[66] store and report on data,[67] and analyse data to view trends.[68] High quality-data entry takes time—the number of data fields, both mandatory and optional, impacts the quality of data collection.[69] Improving data collection standards and consistency requires collaboration and collective effort from the Victorian Government, agencies and service providers,[70] with input from people with lived experience of family violence.[71]

FINDING 16: Building on Victoria's Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework, the consistency and accuracy of data capture on people who use family violence can be improved by:

- standardising data collection practices

- promoting consistent use of terminology and techniques for more accessible and inclusive data collection methods, including ensuring everyone who collects, enters and analyses data understands the data points

- implementing a minimum dataset for service providers on people who use family violence.

RECOMMENDATION 11: The Victorian Government consult with service providers and people with lived experience of family violence, including victim survivors and people using family violence, about the best ways to:

- promote consistency and accuracy of data collection on people who use family violence by standardising data collection practices, methods, tools, templates and standards

- ensure use of accessible and inclusive data collection techniques.

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66   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, received 31 May 2024, pp. 6, 23; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 5; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 23; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, received 14 June 2024, p. 5; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 14; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3; Cafs Ballarat, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 13 September 2024, p. 2; Djirra, *Submission 8*, received 27 May 2024, p. 4; Gillian Clark, AOD Strategy and Reform Manager, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33; Dr Nicola Helps, Senior Project Officer, ANROWS, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 6.

67   Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 45*, pp. 8, 10; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 5; Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3; Rachael Pliner, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Federation of Community Legal Centres, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6.

68   Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, pp. 2, 5; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 23; Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 3; Tania Farha, Chief Executive Officer, Safe and Equal, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 51, 53; Dr Jill Gallagher, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, public hearing, Melbourne, 9 September 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 8; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 6.

69   Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18; Livia La Rocca, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 64.

70   Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 6; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 13.

71   Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, received 31 May 2024, p. 5.

> **RECOMMENDATION 12:** Following completion of Recommendation 1 to undertake a data mapping project, the Victorian Government develop and trial a minimum standard dataset, outlining the mandatory data that is to be collected by all service providers and agencies about people who use family violence. This minimum standard dataset should be developed within 12 months after completion of the data mapping project.

2.1.2 Workforce development to support better data collection

Collecting data about or from people who use family violence requires experience, skill and practice expertise, often developed over time.[72] Data entry also requires skill and knowledge.[73] Continued workforce development to improve data quality is required for specialist family violence and core services, and mainstream and universal services in contact with people who use family violence.[74] See Section 2.2.1 on earlier identification for mainstream and universal services.

TODs are a key specialist family violence service in Victoria.[75] TOD's *Adults using family violence risk assessment interim statewide practice direction* (2023) outlines the risk assessment process and safe and appropriate engagement with adults using family violence.[76] Each TOD is funded to have an Advanced Family Violence Practice Leader (Person Using Violence) and Aboriginal Practice Leader to support risk assessment processes and engagement with the person using violence.[77] All TOD staff receive training on its CRM system, with staff receiving advanced training as required. Refresher training modules on privacy and information sharing requests are available.[78]

FSV developed a *MARAM: Working with adults using family violence risk non-accredited training program* for professionals in prescribed organisations.[79] Identification-level training commenced in November 2023 and intermediate and

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72 MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 15; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 7.

73 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18.

74 Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, *Submission 36*, p. 5; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, pp. 6–7; Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, p. 5; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 5; MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 3; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 6; Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14; Karen Todd, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35. Specialist family violence and core services, and mainstream and universal services are defined in the Abbreviations and key terms part of this report.

75 Family Safety Victoria, *Responding to Family Violence Capability Framework*, 2017. See Abbreviations and key terms part of this report.

76 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria, response to written questions on notice received 4 October 2024, p. 2.

77 Ibid.

78 Ibid., pp. 5–6. See DFFH's responses to questions on notice for further information on TOD training.

79 These are called Information Sharing Entities (ISEs), for example, schools, out-of-home care and health services; and Risk Assessment Entities (RAEs), for example, specialist family violence services, Victoria Police and Child Protection. ISEs are prescribed under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme as specified by the Family Violence Protection (Information Sharing and Risk Management) Regulations 2018; and the Child Information Sharing Scheme as specified by the Child Wellbeing and Safety (Information Sharing) Regulations 2018, see the ISE list (a searchable database) here: Victorian Government, *Information sharing scheme entity list search*, 20 February 2024, <https://www.vic.gov.au/ise-list-search> accessed 8 April 2024.

comprehensive training in February 2024.[80] MARAM and family violence accredited VET training courses are also available.[81]

Ongoing guidance, resources and training can enhance service providers' capacity and capability to accurately and reliably record data on people who use family violence.[82] Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to develop the specialist and core workforces included:

- **Improve capacity and skill**: Provide greater capacity building and skill development to collect, store, share, analyse and use data,[83] incorporate data collection into professional development opportunities[84] and implement and increase training and education.[85] This includes increasing skills and capability to use data to improve future service delivery and identify improvements,[86] support organisational learning[87] and analyse patterns.[88] It also includes training on how to analyse information on individuals to understand a person using family violence and how to manage the risk they pose,[89] and increasing training and workforce development on recognising, addressing and recording elder abuse[90] (see Part 3, Section 3.4) and the ability and confidence to ask questions and collect data on sexual violence[91] (see Part 3, Section 3.3.1). It could also include training and education on how to mitigate against errors and biases in administrative data,[92] how to collect data consistently[93] and training on embedding MARAM (particularly comprehensive MARAM risk assessment tools).[94]

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80 Family Safety Victoria, *MARAMIS quarterly newsletter: Q3 January — March 2024*, newsletter, p. 5.

81 Ibid., p. 6. Examples of accredited VET courses include the *Course in Identifying and Responding to Family Violence* and *Course in Intermediate Risk Assessment and Management of Family Violence.*

82 Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

83 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 6; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 5; Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Darrylin Galanos, Acting Manager, Client Analytics and Reporting, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48; Bernadette McCartney, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

84 Amy Cupper, Manager of Family Safety, Mallee Accommdation and Support Program, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 37; Fiona Bilucaglia, Principal Practitioner for Family Violence, Mallee Sexual Assault Unit and Mallee Domestic Violence Services, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 37.

85 Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, pp. 5, 7; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 7; Vivienne Nguyen, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40; Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 7, 13; Jessica Seamer, PhD Candidate, Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40.

86 Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 5; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 6.

87 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 7.

88 Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, received 14 June 2024, p. 7; ANROWS, *Submission 15*, received 30 May 2024, p. 7.

89 Bernadette McCartney, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

90 Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 4; Ben Rogers, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Council on the Ageing Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 21.

91 Kathleen Maltzahn, Chief Executive Officer, Sexual Assault Services Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 10. See also Bec Wilkin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

92 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 7.

93 Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7.

94 Berry Street, *Submission 31*, pp. 5, 14; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 2, 3, 9; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 7.

- **Improve family violence and AOD data collection**: Upskill the family violence sector and Victoria Police to accurately identify and collect data on family violence and AOD use, to ensure perceptions of sobriety do not negatively impact safety, support and access to services.[95]

The Victorian Government's second rolling action plan (released August 2024) under the *Building from strength: 10-year Industry Plan for family violence prevention and response* (released 2017) notes 'major activity' during 2023–2026. This will include:

- developing online MARAM practice guides

- refining MARAM training and beginning training on working with perpetrators

- 'implementing the MARAM Maturity Model to create tools, guidance and other resources' to help organisations progress towards MARAM alignment.[96]

Skills in data collection, storage, sharing, linkage, use, analysis and research on people who use family violence extend beyond MARAM risk factors. This makes data collection on people who use family violence a key capability for specialist family violence services.

FSV's *Responding to Family Violence Capability Framework* (released 2017) 'provides the foundational skill set required to respond to all … forms of family violence' across four workforce tiers.[97] It recognises that an entry level capability '[c]ollects and documents client data according to the requirements of the organisation and in line with best practice' and a senior level capability '[c]ollates and analyses client data and documents emerging trends to inform systems improvements'.[98] A review of the Framework was underway in 2022,[99] with implementation of the revised Framework to occur across 2023–24.[100] A revised Framework is yet to be released. The Quarter 2 2024–25 MARAMIS Newsletter noted the Framework stated '[t]he revised Prevention Capability Framework is due for release mid-2025'.[101]

FSV's Centre for Workforce Excellence leads initiatives to support all services interacting with victim survivors and people who use family violence. This includes '[b]uilding family violence prevention and response capability' and '[i]dentifying and

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95   Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 21 August 2024, pp. 2–3.

96   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Framing the future: Second rolling action plan*, 2024, p. 30.

97   Family Safety Victoria, *Responding to Family Violence Capability Framework*, p. 8. Tier 1 is specialist family violence and sexual assault practitioners, Tier 2 is workers in core support or intervention agencies, Tier 3 is workers in mainstream and non-family violence specific support agencies, and Tier 4 is workers in universal services and organisations.

98   Ibid., p. 44.

99   Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms: Primary prevention system architecture*, 2022, pp. 13, 20, 31, 33.

100   State of Victoria and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Framing the future*, p. 29.

101   Victorian Government, *MARAMIS Quarterly Newsletter: Quarter 2 (2024–25)*, (n.d.), <https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-02/MARAMIS-Quarterly-Newsletter-PDF-version-Q2-2024-25.pdf> accessed 17 March 2025, p. 14.

researching family violence prevention and response skills and capabilities'.[102] There is an opportunity for the Centre to focus on capacity building and skill development in relation to data collection best practice.

Employing specialist data advisors to build sector capability is an opportunity to provide education, training and best practice guidance on data collection and analysis.[103] The success of Family Violence Advisor roles and SHRFV Working with adults who use Family Violence—Emerging Practice State-wide Lead demonstrates this. See Section 2.2.2. Another example is the Queensland Department of Justice and Attorney-General's April 2024 funding for data strategy and capability uplift activities for the family violence sector (including government agencies and funded service providers).[104] This aims to improve the 'data maturity' of the sector to build understanding of, and commitment to, 'the benefits of adopting an insights driven approach'.[105]

FINDING 17: Collecting data about or from people who use family violence requires experience, skill and practice expertise, often developed over time. Skill development in data collection practices and uses beyond the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework is an opportunity to strengthen family violence workforce capabilities to promote data quality and integrity, and increase knowledge about privacy, security and bias.

RECOMMENDATION 13: The Victorian Government prioritise training and upskilling of the specialist and core workforces (Tier 1 and Tier 2 in Family Safety Victoria's *Responding to Family Violence Capability Framework*) on best practice family and sexual violence data collection and uses.

2.1.3 Collect better data for Victoria's diverse communities

Complete and accurate data from Victoria's diverse communities, including about people experiencing or using family violence, can help build a better understanding of this cohort.[106] Collecting better and consistent data on family violence experiences of different Victorian communities can improve culturally safe and accessible services,[107] identify who is not accessing support and reduce barriers to accessing support,[108]

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102 Victorian Government, *Centre for Workforce Excellence*, 23 October 2019, <https://www.vic.gov.au/centre-workforce-excellence> accessed 26 November 2024.

103 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 7.

104 Queensland Council of Social Services (QCOSS), *Domestic, family and sexual violence data insights*, 6 August 2024, <https://www.qcoss.org.au/project/domestic-family-and-sexual-violence-data-insights> accessed 26 November 2024; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 7.

105 QCOSS, *Domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) data insights network*, terms of reference.

106 Thorne Harbour Health, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 23 August 2024, p. 2; Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 1; Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 49*, received 31 May 2024, p. 2.

107 Settlement Services International, *Submission 13*, received 29 May 2024, p. 2.

108 Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 6.

identify early intervention opportunities,[109] help tailor responses, including perpetrator responses, provide targeted support,[110] and enable better research.[111] It could also improve allocation of funding to high priority areas,[112] promote efficiency in referrals and ensure data accurately represents people using violence in contact with the service system.[113]

Data collection on diverse factors should not stereotype, marginalise, surveil, target or profile people,[114] for example based on ethnicity, culture or religion.[115] See Part 1, Section 1.2. Data collection on different experiences of family violence should also recognise communities are not homogenous and have multiple ways of understanding, experiencing and responding to family violence, requiring a multi-layered approach.[116] This is important to help increase understanding of people who use family violence, and how data collection processes can be improved in relation to:

- First Nations communities[117]

- LGBTIQA+, trans and gender diverse communities and sexuality[118]

- culturally and linguistically diverse, migrant and refugee communities[119]

- the perpetration of sponsor/visa-related family violence,[120] dowry abuse,[121] modern slavery and forced exploitation,[122] and forced marriage[123]

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109 Thorne Harbour Health, response to questions on notice, p. 2.

110 Settlement Services International, *Submission 13*, p. 2; Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 2.

111 Settlement Services International, *Submission 13*, p. 2.

112 Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 2; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 6.

113 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 8.

114 Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, received 14 June 2024, p. 2; Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, received 31 May 2024, p. 6; Settlement Services International, *Submission 13*, p. 2.

115 Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 5.

116 Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, p. 2.

117 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 7; Thorne Harbour Health, response to questions on notice, p. 2; Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 5; Amanda Alford, Director of Government Relations, Policy and Evidence, Our Watch, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14; Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Family, domestic and sexual violence: Key information gaps and development activities*, 17 September 2024, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/resources/key-information-gaps-and-development-activities> accessed 26 November 2024.

118 Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, p. 5; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 5; Bisexual Alliance Victoria, *Submission 11*, received 28 May 2024, p. 2; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 7; Thorne Harbour Health, response to questions on notice, p. 1; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, received 30 May 2024, p. 8; Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 2; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 8; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 36; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 3; Amanda Alford, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Family, domestic and sexual violence*.

119 Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, p. 2; Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 5; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 36; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 3; Amanda Alford, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14; Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3. Professor Manjula O'Connor, Consultant Psychiatrist, Chair RANZCP Family Violence Psychiatry Network, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 50; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Family, domestic and sexual violence*.

120 Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, pp. 1–2; Bec Wilkin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

121 Professor Manjula O'Connor, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

122 Project Respect, *Submission 24*, received 30 May 2024, pp. 4–5; Bec Wilkin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

123 Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, p. 1; Bec Wilkin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

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- where there are multiple perpetrators against the same victim survivor[124]

- people with cognitive impairments[125]

- people with disability and disability-related forms of family violence[126]

- family violence in group homes or institutional settings[127]

- people with neurodivergence[128]

- women and gender diverse people in the sex industry[129]

- criminalised women[130]

- male victim survivors[131]

- regional Victorians and geographical location[132]

- pregnant people[133]

- veteran families[134]

- older people[135] (see Part 3, Section 3.4)

- children and young people[136] (see Part 3, Section 3.5).

124 Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 13.

125 Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, *Submission 36*, pp. 3–4; Bianca Brijnath, Director Social Gerontology, National Ageing Research Institute, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Peter Dickinson, Lawyer, Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 1–2.

126 Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 5; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 7; Bisexual Alliance Victoria, *Submission 11*, p. 2; Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 5; Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 2; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 36; Peter Dickinson, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 2–3; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Family, domestic and sexual violence*.

127 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 15.

128 Bisexual Alliance Victoria, *Submission 11*, p. 2; Dr Jacqueline Rakov, Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 53.

129 Project Respect, *Submission 24*, p. 3; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 36.

130 Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 3.

131 One in Three Campaign, *Submission 60*, received 14 June 2024, pp. 22, 24.

132 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 8; Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, response to questions on notice, p. 2; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 10; Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15; Max Broadley, Independent Chair, Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29; Mika Pediaditis, Research and Evaluation Advisor, Women's Health Grampians, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39.

133 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Family, domestic and sexual violence*.

134 Ibid.

135 Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, p. 5; National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, p. 1; Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 4; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Family, domestic and sexual violence*.

136 Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28; Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Family, domestic and sexual violence*.

To improve data recording, Inquiry stakeholder suggestions included:

- Adopt Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Standards for Statistics on Cultural and Language Diversity 2022[137] and the ABS Standard for Sex, Gender, Variations of Sex Characteristics and Sexual Orientation Variables 2020.[138]

- Use the national Standard Indigenous Question to record First Nations status more widely[139] (an action under Dhelk Dja[140]) and provide a legitimate reason for doing so on request, so people understand how their data will be used.[141]

- Enable databases to capture nuances about diversity.[142]

- Add self-description labels or additional data collection options for disability,[143] First Nations,[144] LGBTIQA+,[145] sex and gender[146] and neurodivergence,[147] to sit alongside consistent broader categories.[148]

- Consider mandating existing data collection frameworks, including the FVDCF, in relation to data collection on intersectional identities or diversity.[149]

The Victorian Government should ensure its databases (for example, IRIS and SHIP) adopt these suggestions where practicable.

To improve data collection practices and upskill practitioners to collect better data for Victoria's diverse communities, Inquiry stakeholder suggestions included:

- Strengthen diversity data collection through specific training or by enhancing cultural awareness training to focus on data collection (and the impacts of inaccurate data capture and use).[150]

- Consider mandating cultural safety training tailored to different sectors.[151] For example, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO) advised cultural safety training was recently mandated in major

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137 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 12; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 8; Settlement Services International, *Submission 13*, p. 2.

138 Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 2; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 8.

139 Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, pp. 6, 14.

140 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 12.

141 Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 14.

142 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 5.

143 Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 2.

144 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 7; Wendy Anders, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

145 Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 5; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 7.

146 Thorne Harbour Health, response to questions on notice, p. 1.

147 Bisexual Alliance Victoria, *Submission 11*, p. 2.

148 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 7.

149 Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 6.

150 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, pp. 6, 13; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 4; Vivienne Nguyen, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40; Dr Jill Gallagher, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4.

151 Dr Jill Gallagher, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 3, 10; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 15.

Victorian hospitals, and it has developed training standards to be trialled with three hospitals.[152]

• Develop and share practice guidance to implement and measure inclusive, culturally sensitive and comprehensive data collection and use across all health and community services.[153]

• Support workers to confidently ask sensitive questions and develop skills on best practice data collection methods for diversity to promote the sharing of personal information.[154]

• Support service providers to consistently apply guidance, including that provided in the FVDCF, on collecting and reporting cultural and language diversity data.[155]

• Standardise expectations on collecting LGBTIQA+ data.[156]

• Require the use of interpreters when there is a language barrier.[157]

• Expand the role of multicultural service providers to educate on best practice[158] and ensure organisations with understanding of multicultural communities can inform qualitative data collection practices.[159]

Any updates to data collection practices or databases for Victoria's diverse communities should be done in consultation or through co-design with the relevant communities and people with lived experience.[160]

FSV continues to work with peak bodies and service providers to strengthen TOD's workforce capability in culturally responsive, integrated and skilled practice. Statewide operational guidance and training supports TOD staff 'to recognise intersectionality of family violence risk and how it is assessed'. This includes TOD induction training on wellbeing and safety of children and young people and training on Aboriginal Cultural Safety, culturally and linguistically diverse communities, working with interpreters, LGBTIQA+ communities and working in an integrated way with TOD clients.[161]

The Committee posed a written question on notice to Magistrates' Court of Victoria (MCV) about its collection of intersectional data.[162] The response stated it 'collects data to fulfil its statutory functions and does not capture detailed individual

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152   Dr Jill Gallagher, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

153   Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 8; Thorne Harbour Health, response to questions on notice, p. 2.

154   Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 7; National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, p. 3; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, pp. 2, 6.

155   Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, pp. 5–6; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 6.

156   Thorne Harbour Health, response to questions on notice, p. 2.

157   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, pp. 6, 13.

158   Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 1.

159   Vivienne Nguyen, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 45.

160   Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 2; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 7.

161   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, response to questions on notice, p. 1.

162   For the full question, see Magistrates' Court of Victoria, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria, response to written questions on notice received 25 October 2024, p. 8.

circumstances, including cultural, socio-economic and psychological factors' and 'the data collected by the Court on intersectional factors in family violence cannot provide a comprehensive understanding of the profiles of individuals who perpetrate family violence or the underlying reasons for their behaviour'.[163] MCV's response highlights a significant gap in intersectional data collection in Victorian courts.

Strengthening family violence data collection on diversity and intersectionality within and beyond TODs (to the broader family violence sector, as well as core, mainstream and universal services) is a significant opportunity to improve understanding about the family violence experiences of Victoria's diverse communities.

This is recognised in the Victorian Government's FVOF Implementation Strategy, which notes the importance of services across the family violence system that 'are personalised, flexible, culturally relevant and reflect individual and family choices, need and circumstances, particularly for diverse communities and those with complex needs'.[164] Key indicators are 'increased involvement of people with lived experience in the design and delivery of services and programs' and 'increased responsiveness to the needs and circumstances of individuals and communities'.[165] The FVOF Implementation Strategy also notes the family violence and broader workforces must be 'skilled' and 'capable' to meet the needs of diverse people.[166]

FINDING 18: Incomplete and inaccurate data from Victoria's diverse communities about people experiencing or using family violence contributes to gaps in our understanding of people who use family violence in Victoria.

FINDING 19: Consistent and good practice data collection about the family violence experiences of Victoria's diverse communities can improve culturally safe and accessible services; help identify who is not accessing support and reduce barriers to accessing support; assist to identify early intervention opportunities, tailor responses, provide targeted support and allocate funding to high-priority areas; and enable better research.

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163   Ibid., p. 4.

164   State of Victoria, *Family Violence Outcomes Framework Measurement and Monitoring Implementation Strategy*, p. 12.

165   Ibid., p. 24.

166   Ibid., p. 13.

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> **RECOMMENDATION 14:** The Victorian Government work with service providers and communities to promote and support data collection about the family violence experiences of Victoria's diverse communities by:
>
> • enhancing training on data collection for diversity and its purpose, and how to confidently ask sensitive questions
>
> • ensuring the Family Violence Data Collection Framework reflects current practice and aligns with the Australian Bureau of Statistics Standards
>
> • developing and distributing enhanced practice guidance
>
> • ensuring translation services are used
>
> • mandating cultural safety training tailored to different sectors
>
> • reviewing how data on diversity is collected through its databases (for example, Integrated Report and Information System) to align data fields with best practice.
>
> This work should be prioritised and reviewed on an ongoing basis.

2.1.4 Victoria Police data collection practices

Victoria Police data collection is 'very good',[167] but ongoing effort is needed to continuously improve understanding, identification and accurate recording of family violence data.[168] Victoria Police are aware that people from culturally diverse backgrounds, in particular First Nations women, are the highest risk group for misidentification.[169] Better understanding the definition of family violence for First Nations communities is a key area for improvement.[170] As is data collection on ethnicity,[171] culturally specific forms of family violence,[172] LGBTIQA+ people and relationship dynamics,[173] disability and disability-related abuse and responses to family violence,[174] substance use,[175] mental health[176] and sexual violence.[177] Further

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167 Fiona Dowsley, Chief Statistician, Crime Statistics Agency, public hearing, Melbourne, 22 July 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 11.

168 Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 3; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 9; The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, received 12 June 2024, p. 2; Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, received 29 May 2024, p. 2; Vivienne Nguyen, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 41.

169 Lauren Callaway, Family Violence Command, Victoria Police, public hearing, Melbourne, 9 September 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 16–17. See *Prioritise rectification processes to correct misidentification* for further discussion on misidenfitcation.

170 Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 8; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 4.

171 The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, p. 5; Professor Manjula O'Connor, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 50.

172 The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, p. 5.

173 Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 5.

174 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 9; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 3; Peter Dickinson, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 2–3.

175 Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, response to questions on notice, p. 3.

176 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 9.

177 Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 11.

research to understand (often invisible) police-perpetrated family violence would also advance understanding.[178]

Victoria Police regularly audit L17s for quality and accuracy. While L17s collect extensive information and are 'designed for what is practical for a police officer in the field at the time', Victoria Police noted '[t]here is always room to improve its data collection' and it is 'open to refining [L17s]'.[179] Victoria Police identified automating L17 information input, ease of completing an L17 in the field and increasing data collection for culturally and linguistically diverse communities as improvement areas.[180] Victoria Police data will not always be complete or accurate as it is collected in a crisis and people do not always want to share information.[181] Officers 'must report the facts and the evidence before them when responding to an incident, as it is often through accurate reporting of family violence incidents over time that a clearer picture of the nature and the dynamic of family violence will emerge'.[182] Officers regularly add information to L17s up to 14 days after an incident,[183] after which a supplementary report can be added to provide case narrative.[184]

Victoria Police provides rapport building training to elicit information[185] (for example, through open-ended questioning) and two stages of multicultural training:

1. Mandatory training for officers and Protection Service Officers (PSOs) at the Victoria Police Academy, including eight hours in the Foundation Training Program and three hours of Aboriginal Cultural Awarenes Training for officers and six hours for PSOs.[186]

2. Ongoing refresher training of approximately one hour.[187]

For First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse communities, more regular Victoria Police training on data collection, biases in data collection and definitions of family violence could help counter biases and increase cultural awareness.[188] As could procedures on identifying and collecting data on culturally specific forms of family

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178 Flat Out and Police Accountability Project, *Submission 38*, received 31 May 2024, p. 1; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 36; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 2.

179 Lauren Callaway, Assistant Commissioner, Family Violence Command, Victoria Police, public hearing, Melbourne, 9 September 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 17–18.

180 Ibid., pp. 18, 19.

181 Claire Waterman, Director Strategy, Policy and Reform Division, Family Violence Command, Victoria Police, public hearing, Melbourne, 9 September 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18; Lauren Callaway, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18.

182 Lauren Callaway, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16.

183 Ibid., p. 18; Claire Waterman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18.

184 Lauren Callaway, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18; Claire Waterman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

185 Lauren Callaway, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22.

186 Units include *Community Diversity*, *Community Encounters*, *Effective Communications in a Policing Context* and *Multi-faith and multi-culture session*, *Prejudice Motivated Crime* and *Priority Communities Written Assessment*. For further information, see Victoria Police, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 7 October 2024, p. 1.

187 Ibid., p. 2. Victoria Police's response to the question on notice did not outline how regularly officers and employees receive the one hour refresher training, nor the delivery format.

188 Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 9; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 13; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 4; Patrick Cook, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18; Dr Jill Gallagher, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 2, 10.

violence, developed in consultation with experts.[189] These procedures should include appropriate translation and interpreting services to ensure data capture for diverse communities is accurate.[190] Victoria Police currently uses interpreting services, but noted accessing interpreting services can be a challenge (for example, because of a language or dialect availability of the Victorian Government contracted services, and policies around not using family members as interpreters where possible).[191]

Embedding trauma-informed practices into Victoria Police family violence procedures could help ensure sensitive, nuanced, culturally safe and accurate data collection and address underreporting.[192] In addition to Victoria Police's commitment to grow a diverse workforce, with a focus on increasing the representation of women, First Nations peoples, people with disabilities and 'those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds',[193] further cultural safety or anti-racism training for Victoria Police and other first responders may help people feel safer to report family violence.[194] Training can also help address misidentification.[195] See *Prioritise rectification processes to correct misidentification* below. Increasing Victoria Police training on mental ill health and disability, and how these factors intersect with family violence, could also enhance data accuracy.[196]

Under the FVP Act, Victoria Police officers may only apply for a family violence safety notice if they have 'no reasonable grounds for suspecting the respondent has a cognitive impairment'.[197] This means a safety notice may not be issued to people who have a cognitive impairment who use family violence.[198] The recent rollout of disability liaison officers in Victoria Police regions may help improve understanding of cognitive disabilities for people who use family violence.[199] Further strengthening Victoria Police's understanding of how people with disability experience family violence and the barriers to reporting, and how people with disability use family violence (including potentially avoiding accountability), would support better data collection.[200]

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189   The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, pp. 2, 5.

190   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 13; The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, p. 5.

191   Claire Waterman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

192   The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, p. 5.

193   Victoria Police, *Valuing diversity: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders*, 7 February 2025, <https://www.police.vic.gov.au/diversity#aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islanders> accessed 27 February 2025.

194   Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 13.

195   Juergen Kaehne, Principal Managing Lawyer, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6; Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7.

196   No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 9; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 6.

197   *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) s 24. A safety notice is a short-term intervention order issued by Victoria Police that aims to protect people before an intervention order application can be heard in court. See Victoria Police, *Family violence safety notices and intervention orders*, 1 July 2021, <https://www.police.vic.gov.au/intervention-orders> accessed 27 November 2024.

198   Peter Dickinson, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 1–2.

199   Ibid., p. 2.

200   Ibid., pp. 2–3.

Some Inquiry stakeholders suggested Victoria Police includes technology-facilitated abuse as a specific form of family violence on L17s, accompanied by additional training to understand and identify it.[201] Victoria Police advised that the L17 form is an actuarial tool (providing a risk score) that, following major changes in 2018, has 39 questions aligned to MARAM risk factors.[202] The L17 is a 'significant dataset' that 'accurately predicts the weighting of the risk rating numbers'. This means considerable work would be required before any changes are made.[203]

Victoria Police can analyse data from L17s,[204] for example, reviewing narrative data to understand contributing factors to the use of family violence.[205] Victoria Police provides extensive family violence data to CSA, including narrative data.[206] Victoria Police also provides rich L17 data to researchers, for example, for a project on pet abuse with Melbourne University.[207] There may be some benefit to developing protocols to share de-identified Victoria Police data more effectively and comprehensively in a timely way with researchers and service providers.[208]

> **FINDING 20:** Victoria Police L17 reports are designed to practically and comprehensively assess and manage family violence risk, meaning use of the data L17s capture about people who use family violence should be viewed in this context. Continuous improvement and refinement of L17s and data capture processes can improve Victoria Police's ability to further understand, identify and accurately record family violence data, particularly about First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse and LGBTIQA+ people, and people with disability; and sexual violence, mental illness and substance use.

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201 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 10; Dr Amy Webster, Policy, Advocacy and Research Manager, Sexual Assault Services Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12.

202 Lauren Callaway, *Transcript of evidence*, p 15.

203 Ibid., p. 21. See the Victoria Police transcript for further discussion on elevating risk and risk ratings.

204 Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20,* received 30 May 2024, p. 4.

205 Ibid.

206 Victoria Police, response to questions on notice, p. 1; Lauren Callaway, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

207 Claire Waterman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Dr Hayley Boxall, Research Fellow, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

208 Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 4; Dr Hayley Boxall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

→ Prioritise rectification processes to correct misidentification
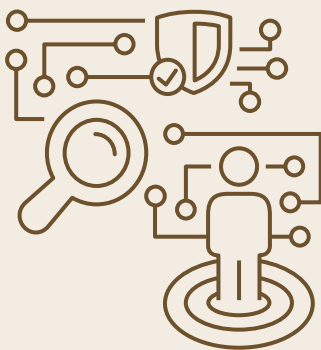
> Misidentification compromises the accuracy and quality of data captured, which can lead to ineffective outcomes from decisions relating to government policies, resource allocation and service prioritisation. Accurate data collection on people who use family violence requires a whole of system approach to prevent and rectify misidentification, ensure data collected is not misleading, and enable information on data systems to be easily updated (e.g. Victoria Police LEAP [Law Enforcement Assistance Program] database) to avoid harm for people misidentified.

Federation of Community Legal Centres[a]

The rate of misidentification is difficult to determine, but research suggests that about 10–12% of Victoria Police Family Violence Reports misidentify a victim survivor as the person using family violence.[b] Every misidentification of a victim survivor represents missing information about a perpetrator and prevents perpetrators being held to account.[c]

Frontline responders may misidentify a victim survivor for several reasons, including:

- low understanding of the gendered dynamics of family violence may mean the victim survivor's reaction to abuse is seen as primary aggression[d]

- victim survivors may be more mentally disorganised and emotional from the abuse, while the person using family violence may present as calm and lucid and therefore more likely to be believed,[e] or the person using family violence may deliberately frame the victim survivor as violent[f]

- system requirements (for example, Victoria Police officers must identify a respondent (person using family violence) when they attend an incident but a clearer picture of the violence may only emerge over time).[g]

Some effects of misidentification include:

- **Intersectionality creates unique complexities**
  Victim survivors from groups such as First Nations communities, culturally and linguistically diverse and migrant communities, women who have disabilities, especially cognitive disabilities, and women who are incarcerated, homeless, and/ or have criminal histories, are less likely to be believed and identified accurately.[h] People from a LGBTIQA+ community are also misidentified at higher rates due to gender stereotyping[i] and the perception that the violence is mutual.[j] Misidentification for diverse groups can be exacerbated by additional barriers like mutual injuries, deficits in recall due to substance abuse or trauma, language and communication barriers, and abuse that takes place through cultural practice involving multiple perpetrators.[k]

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a Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, received 14 June 2024, p. 13. b Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms: Accurate identification of the predominant aggressor*, 2021, p. 11; Women's Legal Service Victoria, *Snapshot of police family violence intervention order applications: January–May 2018* (n.d.), <https://www.womenslegal.org.au/~womensle/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Snapshot-of-Police-Family-Violence-Intervention-Order-applications.pdf> accessed 11 October 2024. c Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms*, p. 14; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, received 30 May 2024, p. 10. d Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, received 23 June 2024, p. 35; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 12. e Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms*, p. 12. f Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, pp. 31, 33. g Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms*, p. 8; Lauren Callaway, Assistant Commissioner, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16. h Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 33; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, received 30 May 2024, p. 14; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 12; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, received 31 May 2024, p. 21; Women's Legal Service Victoria, *Snapshot of police family violence intervention order applications*; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 12; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, pp. 1–2. i Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3. j Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3. k The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, received 12 June 2024, p. 4.

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- **Exposure to further injustice and increased risk**
  Misidentification increases the risk of ongoing violence, forced separation of families, criminalisation and homelessness.[a] Poor data makes risk assessment less effective, which may put potential future victim survivors at greater risk[b] and exposes victim survivors to systems abuse as the person using family violence has more opportunities to weaponise the justice system.[c] It also discourages or systematically prevents victim survivors from seeking future support services.[d]

- **Skews data**
  Misidentification distorts understanding of family violence and can obscure the full picture of perpetration.[e] There is little reliable data on the prevalence of misidentification, because when an FVIO is struck out or withdrawn due to misidentification, this reason is not recorded.[f] Each agency has its own way of recording misidentification, if it is recorded at all, meaning there is no way to examine that data systematically.[g]

- **Information sharing impacts**
  While FVISS has enabled greater information sharing to manage risk, this can compound the negative impacts of misidentification when the information is shared among more services.[h] Fragmented data systems make it difficult to clearly see the patterns of a person using family violence, increasing the chances of misidentification.[i]

Inquiry stakeholders raised concerns about the process to correct a record and reverse the damage of misidentification to victim survivors wrongly identified as the predominant aggressor on an L17 report.[j] Misidentification may be identified later in other system processes, and while corrected in court records and systems like the TOD CRM, there is no consistent process across the entire family violence service system to rectify misidentification.[k] Police records in LEAP and L17 reports cannot be corrected even when misidentification is identified.[l]

The FVRIM's 2021 report on misidentification found the Victorian Government's policy and guidance had not translated into consistent improvements in practice, with misidentification still an urgent issue.[m] The report made sixteen suggested actions to address misidentification across the family violence system.[n] While there is no Victorian Government response to this report (nor a requirement to provide one), the Victorian Government has progressed several initiatives that relate to FVRIM's proposed actions. For example, establishing a director's working group,[o] releasing a MARAM predominant aggressor identification tool[p] and collecting data on how many people are misidentified and their experiences.[q] FSV noted that responding to misidentification requires a whole of government approach.[r]

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a Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 12. **b** No to Violence, *Submission 61*, received 14 June 2024, p. 12. **c** Ibid., p. 15. **d** One in Three Campaign, *Submission 60*, received 14 June 2024, p. 23. **e** inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 21; One in Three Campaign, *Submission 60*, p. 23. **f** Victoria Legal Aid, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 26 August 2024, p. 1. **g** Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 13. **h** No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 16. **i** Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, received 14 June 2024, p. 5. **j** Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, received 26 July 2024, p. 8; Victoria Legal Aid, response to questions on notice, p. 1; Djirra, *Submission 8*, received 27 May 2024, pp. 1, 5; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 5; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 13; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 23; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, received 31 May 2024, p. 5; FVREE, *Submission 37*, received 31 May 2024, p. 2; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 5; The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, p. 4; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 16; Federation of Community Legal Centres, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 16 September 2024, p. 2. **k** Victoria Legal Aid, response to questions on notice, p. 1; Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, received 17 July 2024, p. 13; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 15. **l** Federation of Community Legal Centres, response to questions on notice, p. 2. **m** Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms*, p. 5. **n** Ibid., p. 6. For example, proposed action 6 for Victoria Police to '[u]rgently review how family violence records are captured in LEAP to ensure that where misidentification is found, the record can be amended so a person doesn't continue to be incorrectly listed as a respondent', proposed action 11 for Courts and legal services to '[g]ive urgent attention to exploring legislative options to provide courts with the power to find that misidentification has occurred and to issue a court order for all records to be corrected'. **o** Claire Waterman, Director Strategy, Policy and Reform Division, Family Violence Command, Victoria Police, public hearing, Melbourne, 9 September 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17. **p** Amber Griffiths, Executive Director, Family and Sexual Violence Programs, Family Safety Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 67. **q** Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 13. **r** Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 67–68.

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Victoria Police's predominant aggressor trial in 2022[a] examined police risk identification decisions and opportunities to improve police processes when misidentification occurs. From this, Victoria Police enhanced policy and practice guidance and specialist training, identified key staff available to discuss possible misidentification with specialist services, and provided clarity to members on how to rectify misidentification.[b] L17 forms can be updated up to 14 days after the report was begun to incorporate additional information from parties to the incident and organisations such as TOD,[c] presenting an opportunity to correct misidentification or reduce the impacts of misidentification.

Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to improve family violence system processes in relation to misidentification included:

- **Formalise data validation processes**
  Make certain service providers responsible for validating the accuracy of data received from a referring agency to help correct misidentification and reduce the impacts of sharing incorrect information (and improve data quality, see Section 2.1).[d] TODs can already flag potential misidentification and communicate this to police, courts and other agencies.[e]

- **Create a whole of government correction mechanism and system response**
  Implement a mechanism to correct misidentification in Victoria Police and other system records, including Child Protection, CIP and government departments.[f] Service providers often have more comprehensive and rigorous data on a family violence situation. A formal mechanism is needed for this data to reach agencies across government and courts, and for agencies and courts to have the systems in place to take action based on that data.[g] This could include notifying CIP and ISEs when FVIOs are withdrawn due to misidentification[h] (noting CIP currently removes reports if it becomes aware of misidentification),[i] collecting, collating and sharing better historical and pattern-based data rather than single incident data,[j] better funding public legal services to help identify and correct misidentification,[k] and improving understanding of family violence dynamics across different sectors and the courts, including for diverse cohorts.[l] Better collaboration and system improvements are needed to prevent misidentification.[m]

- **Improve visibility over problem**
  Collect data on the frequency of misidentification,[n] the effectiveness of actions taken in response,[o] the use of MARAM misidentification tools,[p] how many FVIOs are withdrawn[q] and the rate of misidentification at Victoria Police.[r] While it is essential to correct misidentification, retaining this data will provide valuable information about prevalence and patterns that is currently unavailable.[s]

a This occurred in the North-West Metro Division 5 for three months. Lauren Callaway, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16. **b** Ibid. **c** Ibid., p. 20. **d** inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, pp. 21, 23; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 9. **e** Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 62. **f** Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, p. 8; Victoria Legal Aid, response to questions on notice, p. 1; Djirra, *Submission 8*, pp. 1, 5; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 5; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 13; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 23; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 5; FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 2; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 5; The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, p. 4; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 61; Federation of Community Legal Centres, response to questions on notice, p. 2. **g** Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 68; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 22. **h** Victoria Legal Aid, response to questions on notice, pp. 1–2. **i** Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 68. **j** inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 21; ANROWS, *Submission 15*, received 30 May 2024, p. 6; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3. **k** Victoria Legal Aid, response to questions on notice, p. 2; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 10. **l** Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, received 14 June 2024, p. 6; Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, p. 5; Victoria Legal Aid, response to questions on notice, p. 2; Name withheld, *Submission 1*, received 9 April 2024, p. 1. **m** Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 1; Federation of Community Legal Centres, response to questions on notice, p. 2. **n** Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 6; Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, p. 5; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 4; Federation of Community Legal Centres, response to questions on notice, p. 2; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 4; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 10. **o** Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 4. **p** Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 35. **q** Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, p. 5; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 4. **r** Federation of Community Legal Centres, response to questions on notice, p. 2. **s** For example, there is data on how many FVIOs are withdrawn, but not how many of those were withdrawn based on correcting misidentification. Victoria Legal Aid, response to questions on notice, p. 1.

FINDING 21: Misidentification of the predominant aggressor skews statistics on family violence prevalence, assists perpetrators to avoid accountability and contributes to adverse outcomes for victim survivors, such as lack of access to support services, exposure to systems abuse, increased risk of ongoing violence and forced separation of families.

FINDING 22: Diverse communities can be disproportionately impacted by misidentification. Misidentification can mask the data on the experiences of family violence of people from diverse communities and people using family violence.

FINDING 23: There is no clear process to correct misidentification and due to inconsistent data capture, the scale of the issue is unknown.

RECOMMENDATION 15: The Victorian Government develop a clear system-wide process to correct misidentification in family violence records by 2027. This should include ensuring that service providers or agencies can validate information received and shared. Data on the prevalence of misidentification and the effectiveness of corrective actions should be collected to inform future reform.

RECOMMENDATION 16: The Victorian Government publicly report by 2027 on how it will implement the suggested actions, including timelines, in the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's report *Monitoring Victoria's Family Violence Reforms: Accurate Identification of the Predominant Aggressor* (2021).

2.2 Identify people who use family violence earlier

Encouraging early help-seeking and identifying family violence, and intervening before crisis point,[209] criminal justice intervention[210] or engagement with statutory bodies,[211] can prevent family violence from escalating or incidents occurring.[212] Collecting data about people who use family violence through earlier intervention can also provide insights into this cohort, including about triggers and escalation points of violence.[213]

One outcome in the FVOF Implementation Strategy is, specialist and core services can intervene early where family violence is identified to prevent escalation and harm.[214] For example, the Early Resolution Service (also known as pre-court engagement) allows family violence matters to be resolved before court with the help of a VLA or community legal centre lawyer.[215] The Service effectively links victim survivors and people who use violence to services, and identifies other legal needs and early resolution options.[216]

Mainstream and universal services can also recognise and respond early to risk factors for the experience and/or use of family violence and refer people to support.[217] For example, health services are often the first point of disclosure, particularly for injuries or mental health impacts linked to family violence. Earlier intervention points include:

- the health system, including but not limited to hospitals, GPs, emergency departments,[218] nurses,[219] community and primary health services[220]

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209 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25.

210 Ibid.

211 Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 54.

212 Ibid.; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 1.

213 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

214 State of Victoria, *Family Violence Outcomes Framework Measurement and Monitoring Implementation Strategy*, p. 8.

215 Victoria Legal Aid, *Early Resolution Service for family violence matters*, 14 September 2022, <https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/early-resolution-service-family-violence-matters> accessed 27 November 2024.

216 Rachael Pliner, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14; Juergen Kaehne, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 14–15. The Committee received differing evidence about funding for the Early Resolution Service. The Magistrates' Court of Victoria advised funding for its role in the Service was not continued beyond 2022–23. The Federation of Community Legal Centres advised it has 'funding for the next financial year' (2024–25) for the Service. See Magistrates' Court of Victoria, response to written questions on notice, p. 3; Rachael Pliner, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14.

217 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25; Vivienne Nguyen, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 42; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

218 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 25, 27; Ben Rogers, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Vincent Silk, Team Leader, Family Violence Services, Thorne Harbour Health, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 45; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61; Wendy Anders, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 10; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 1; Livia La Rocca, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 1; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 14; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, received 30 May 2024, p. 5; National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, p. 3; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 4; Peninsula Health, *Submission 32*, p. 1; Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence State-wide Leadership Team, *Submission 47*, received 31 May 2024, p. 4; Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 10; Susan George, *Submission 55*, received 14 June 2024, p. 1; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 18; MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 3; Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 2; Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 28 August 2024, p. 2.

219 Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 41.

220 Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 1.

- mental health services and professionals[221]

- Ambulance Victoria, paramedics and non-emergency patient transport[222]

- education and schools,[223] and youth programs[224]

- parenting and interactions with fathers[225]

- maternal and child health,[226] child and family services[227] (including childcare[228] and early childhood services like playgroups[229])

- relationship services[230]

- private clinics and providers,[231] including private psychologists[232]

- private bodies like banks, and real estate, financial and insurance agencies[233]

- workplaces[234]

- local councils—as a workplace, service provider (for example, services like sports groups, playgroups, and maternal and child health), and connector of services, decision-makers and community leaders[235]

- LGBTIQA+ specialist services, for example GPs, sexual health or youth services[236]

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221 Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 34, 40; Associate Professor Andrew Carroll, Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, Fellow of RANZCP, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 43; Phillip Ripper, Chief Executive Officer, No to Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 56; Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 4; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 1; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 5; The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, p. 6; Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 3.

222 Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30.

223 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25; Dom Ennis, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 41; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 1; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 14; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 5; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 4; Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 3; MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 3; Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, response to questions on notice, p. 2.

224 Monash City Council, *Submission 21*, received 30 May 2024, p. 5.

225 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25; Jac Dwyer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 56; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 6.

226 Bec Wilkin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 1; Monash City Council, *Submission 21*, p. 5.

227 Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34; Monash City Council, *Submission 21*, p. 5; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 6.

228 Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 41.

229 Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 1; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 14; Monash City Council, *Submission 21*, p. 5.

230 Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 1.

231 Dom Ennis, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35; Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 54; Elaine Williams, Principal Strategic Advisor, Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35.

232 Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 41.

233 Ben Rogers, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 5–6; Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 10; MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 3; Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 2; Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, response to questions on notice, p. 2.

234 Monash City Council, *Submission 21*, p. 3; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 14.

235 Monash City Council, *Submission 21*, p. 3; Municipal Association of Victoria, *Submission 29*, received 31 May 2024, p. 1; Mitchell Shire Council, *Submission 66*, received 24 June 2024, p. 4; Thorne Harbour Health, response to questions on notice, p. 3.

236 Thorne Harbour Health, response to questions on notice, p. 3.

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- settlement services,[237] including education for new migrants[238]

- lawyers, legal services and community legal services[239]

- homelessness and housing services[240]

- AOD services[241]

- gambling services[242]

- disability support providers and workers[243]

- financial service staff and financial counsellors[244]

- disaster response workers[245]

- social settings and social clubs[246]

- federal services like Services Australia, Medicare, Centrelink, Australian Tax Office, Immigration,[247] NDIS Quality and Safeguard Commission[248] and aged care[249]—see Section 2.6.

Over 6,000 organisations across different workforces in justice, police, human services, education and health sectors have a legislative obligation to align with MARAM.[250] Some early identification points (including those listed above) are prescribed ISEs and others are not.[251]

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237 Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

238 Professor Manjula O'Connor, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

239 Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14; Patrick Cook, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9; Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 4; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 1; Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, response to questions on notice, p. 2; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 10.

240 Jac Dwyer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61; Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34; Respect Victoria, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 10 September 2024, p. 1; Phillip Ripper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 56; Monash City Council, *Submission 21*, p. 5; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 18.

241 Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34; Respect Victoria, response to questions on notice, p. 1; Phillip Ripper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 56; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 1; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 5; Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, *Submission 22*, received 30 May 2024, p. 3.

242 Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 1.

243 Peter Dickinson, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 3–4; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 3; Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, response to questions on notice, p. 2.

244 Respect Victoria, response to questions on notice, p. 1; Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, response to questions on notice, p. 3.

245 Respect Victoria, response to questions on notice, p. 1.

246 Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, received 19 July 2024, p. 15; Thorne Harbour Health, response to questions on notice, p. 3.

247 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14.

248 Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, response to questions on notice, p. 2.

249 National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, p. 3; Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 10; Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, response to questions on notice, p. 2.

250 Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 58.

251 Monash City Council, *Submission 21*, p. 5. Prescribed Information Sharing Entities (ISEs), are for example, schools, out-of-home care and health services. ISEs are prescribed under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme as specified by the Family Violence Protection (Information Sharing and Risk Management) Regulations 2018; and the Child Information Sharing Scheme as specified by the Child Wellbeing and Safety (Information Sharing) Regulations 2018, see the ISE list (a searchable database) here Victorian Government, Information sharing scheme entity list search, 20 February 2024, <https://www.vic.gov.au/ise-list-search> accessed 8 April 2024.

Different MARAM assessment tools are used by different services. [252] Some collect data on family violence and some collect data on people who use family violence.[253] Some may not identify use of family violence, but hold data on people who use family violence.[254] There are opportunities to link this data with that held by specialist and core services (for example, linking hospital data with specialist family violence data on behaviours) to form a comprehensive picture of perpetration.[255] Early intervention points can also proactively share risk data (for example, if they identify family violence or a person using family violence through an assessment) with family violence services, and between services.[256] See Section 2.5.

Early identification allows practitioners to identify the use of family violence, and after attending to presenting needs, establish a relationship to engage with people on their use of family violence.[257] It takes time for this relationship to form and certain practitioners, for example GPs, are not going to be in a position to ask a client extensive MARAM questions in the first session (if at all).[258]

High service demand often results in service providers focusing on people with the highest risk, reducing the likelihood and benefit of early identification if there is no capacity to provide support.[259] For early intervention to be effective, specialist and core service providers require capacity to support people deemed lower risk. Currently, some victim survivors and people who use family violence deemed low priority through data (including risk assessment data) may not be provided support.[260] As MARAM is embedded in more organisations, information sharing requests will increase, making capacity building to respond promptly a priority.[261]

Early intervention points that identify family violence and collect data from victim survivors must believe victim survivors. The data and stories that victim survivors share early on are sometimes dismissed, questioned or doubted until a significant incident occurs. Doubting the data reduces the value of the information provided by victim survivors.[262]

> **FINDING 24:** Early identification can build a fuller picture of people who use family violence by collecting data at an earlier point in time, for example on triggers or escalation points. People who use family violence are often in contact with mainstream and universal services, prior to contact with any specialist services, highlighting the importance of these services in recognising and responding early to risk factors for the experience and/or use of family violence, and referring people to support.

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252   Ibid.

253   Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59.

254   Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 1.

255   Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59; Municipal Association of Victoria, *Submission 29*, p. 2.

256   Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35.

257   Livia La Rocca, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61.

258   Ibid., p. 62; Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 62.

259   Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 64.

260   Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, pp. 2–3.

261   Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 15.

262   Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 3.

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of early intervention. One outcome of the FVOF Implementation Strategy is that the 'family violence system intervenes early to identify and respond to family violence' to 'prevent escalation and minimise harm and risk for people using family violence and those at risk of using family violence'.[263]

The Victorian Government's Early Intervention Investment Framework (EIIF), with $1.1 billion announced in the 2024–25 State Budget for initiatives over five years,[264] aims to link funding to quantifiable impacts to:[265]

- 'improve the lives of Victorians by getting them the help they need earlier and reduce unsustainable pressure on Victoria's service systems'

- encourage 'the uptake of early intervention initiatives at a wider scale'

- improve capability 'to quantify outcomes and measure evidence'

- provide 'a basis for trialling innovative early intervention initiatives, ensuring that evidence on the effectiveness of initiatives is collected and reported, and allowing for successful initiatives to be scaled up'.[266]

The 2024–25 State Budget noted a 'key focus of this year's EIIF package are initiatives that seek to mitigate and respond to family violence'. This includes funding of $167.5 million over five years for family violence initiatives across four departments: the Department of Education; DFFH; the Department of Government Services; and the Department of Justice and Community Services (DJCS).[267] See Part 4, Section 4.1.4 for further discussion about relevant initiatives linked to the EIIF.

EIIF supports better budget decision-making and long-term social service investment. Its focus on short and long-term evaluation of impacts provides an opportunity to align family violence prevention and early intervention activities in the FVOF with the EIIF.[268]

> **FINDING 25:** The Victorian Government's Family Violence Outcomes Framework Measuring and Monitoring Implementation Strategy and Early Intervention Investment Framework recognise the importance of early identification and intervention to respond to family violence, improving impact and outcome measures, scaling up the trial of innovative early intervention initiatives, and building the evidence base on their effectiveness.

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263   State of Victoria, *Family Violence Outcomes Framework Measurement and Monitoring Implementation Strategy*, p. 12.

264   Department of Treasury and Finance, *Budget Paper No. 3: Service Delivery*, 2024/25, p. 207.

265   Department of Treasury and Finance, *Early Intervention Investment Framework*, 18 November 2024, <https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/early-intervention-investment-framework> accessed 29 November 2024.

266   Department of Treasury and Finance, *The Early Intervention Investment Framework: A considered and collaborative approach to support early intervention investment*, Victorian Government, Melbourne, 2022, pp. 1–3.

267   Department of Treasury and Finance, *Budget Paper No. 3*, pp. 208–209.

268   Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 13. Joshua Lourensz, Executive Director, Catholic Social Services Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 19.

RECOMMENDATION 17: The Victorian Government review the Family Violence Outcomes Framework Measuring and Monitoring Implementation Strategy and Early Intervention Investment Framework to ensure family violence prevention and early intervention activities for people who use family violence are aligned and linked to quantifiable impact and outcome measures.

2.2.1 Improve early identification

MARAM and FVISS are key early identification and intervention mechanisms. MARAM implementation involves more than using risk assessment tools.[269] It requires a shared understanding of family violence across mainstream and universal services to capture information about people who use family violence in ways that can be easily shared.[270] MARAM alignment transcends single organisations and requires multi-agency collaboration across local regions.[271]

Resources and governance support help organisations to embed MARAM holistically and complements training and professional development for staff.[272] Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to upskill early intervention points through MARAM and FVISS included:

- **Support to embed MARAM and FVISS**: Support organisations to embed and strengthen MARAM and feel confident collecting data on people who use family violence,[273] and increase understanding of MARAM, MARAM responsibilities[274] and risk-relevant information that can be shared under FVISS.[275] See Section 2.4. Support services to know what data to collect (for example, through a MARAM tool) and how to share data about people who use family violence if identified (for example, increase understanding that consent is not required to share information about a person using family violence under FVISS).[276]

- **Enhance MARAM training**:[277] Extend training so mainstream and universal services know how to have safe, appropriate conversations and implement non-collusive practices.[278] Better promote readily available MARAM training[279] and leverage

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269   Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

270   Ibid., p. 61; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 14.

271   Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 14.

272   Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61; Kirsten Majidi, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61.

273   Jac Dwyer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 50; Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35; Renee Blight, Safeguarding, Stratey and Reform Practice Lead, Social Work, Peninsula Health, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14; Thorne Harbour Health, response to questions on notice, p. 3; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 7; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 14.

274   Bec Wilkin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2.

275   Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14.

276   Jac Dwyer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52; Bec Wilkin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52.

277   Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 37; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 7.

278   Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 37.

279   Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 41.

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FVRICs to provide governance support and training for MARAM implementation in regional areas.[280]

- **Ensure sufficient resourcing**: Ensure services are resourced to identify and record data on people who use family violence,[281] and to apply MARAM.[282]

To support these MARAM enhancements and the improvements identified in Section 2.1.1, Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to improve mainstream and universal workforces' early identification capabilities included:

- **Improve training to identify family violence and data collection**: Implement and support training and education across mainstream and universal services to identify family violence and data collection practices,[283] and for different workforces like the disability support workforce,[284] child and family services,[285] staff in schools,[286] mental health professionals,[287] and smaller community and multicultural organisations.[288] This could include developing accessible webinars on data collection[289] and greater training for Child Protection on engaging with people using family violence and holding them accountable for abuse.[290] All training should be culturally informed and accurately recognise family violence as understood by First Nations communities.[291]

- **Improve elder abuse training**: Increase training on recognising, addressing and recording elder abuse, particularly for health services, banks and aged care.[292] See Part 3, Section 3.4. For example, Elder Abuse Action Australia was awarded an Australian Government grant in 2024[293] to develop a digital learning app on elder abuse for workers and professionals interacting with older people,[294] and awareness-raising and educational materials about elder abuse.[295]

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280 Kirsten Majidi, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 62.

281 Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 1.

282 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 7.

283 Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, pp. 6, 7; Cafs Ballarat, response to questions on notice, p. 1; Livia La Rocca, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 63; Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14; Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Ben Rogers, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25; Wendy Anders, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 10; Karen Todd, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35; Sharan Ermel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 4; Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 10.

284 Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, *Submission 36*, p. 5; Peter Dickinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4.

285 Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 6.

286 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 4; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, pp. 5–6.

287 The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, p. 6.

288 Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49; Ben Rogers, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25.

289 Wendy Anders, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14.

290 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25.

291 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 4.

292 Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 13.

293 Australian Department of Social Services, *National Family, Domestic and Sexual Violence (FDSV) Workforce Education on Abuse of Older People*, <https://www.communitygrants.gov.au/grants/2023-2245> accessed 29 November 2024.

294 Elder Abuse Action Australia, *National Family Domestic and Sexual Violence (FDSV) Workforce Education on Abuse of Older People Project: Workforce workshops*, <https://eaaa.org.au/event/workforce-workshops-fdsv-project> accessed 29 November 2024.

295 Elder Abuse Action Australia, *National Family Domestic and Sexual Violence (FDSV) Workforce Education on Abuse of Older People Project: Community workshops*, <https://eaaa.org.au/event/community-focus-groups> accessed 29 November 2024.

- **Support FVDCF implementation**: Provide greater support to organisations and professionals in mainstream and universal services to implement the FVDCF.[296]

- **Increase dialogue about insights**: Increase dialogue between the Victorian Government and service providers and practitioners working with people who use family violence about their insights into early identification opportunities.[297] See Part 1, Section 1.4.

- **Create strategy**: Develop a family violence early intervention strategy.[298]

There have been positive initiatives in hospitals to identify family violence. See Section 2.2.2. Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to improve early identification in hospitals included:

- **Create and embed robust and clear processes, training and guidance** for hospitals and health practitioners to capture and share data on people who use family violence. This will create clarity on legal requirements and build confidence to capture family violence-related data in hospitals.[299] See Section 2.5.2 on hospital databases.

- **Support Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence (SHRFV)** to do a 'gap analysis' to better understand priorities for increasing hospital staff capability and capacity.[300]

- **Ensure Aboriginal Liaison Officers in hospitals** receive training on identifying and responding to family violence,[301] and tailor training for different contexts, for example, remote or urban communities.[302]

Trained and supported workforces will increase the strength of data collection about people who use family violence.[303] Training on identifying family violence is particularly important because if the question is not asked, the data is not collected. A barrier to capturing this data is if service providers are funded to deliver a narrow range of services and identifying family violence is not core business.[304] For example, Law Institute of Victorica (LIV) advised that lawyers receive no compulsory training around family violence.[305]

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296 Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 10.

297 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

298 Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 5.

299 Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence State-wide Leadership Team, *Submission 47*, p. 3; Susan George, *Submission 55*, p. 4; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, pp. 6–7; Sharan Ermel, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 12, 14, 16; Amanda Morris, Statewide Lead, Metropolitan Sector, Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence State-wide Leadership Team, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 13; Renee Blight, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14.

300 Amanda Morris, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 13.

301 Wendy Anders, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 10; Renee Blight, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16.

302 Wendy Anders, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 11; Renee Blight, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16.

303 Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 15.

304 Livia La Rocca, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 63; Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 37.

305 Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14.

The 2022 FVRIM report *Early identification of family violence within universal services* proposed (actions 9–13) that the Victorian Government:

- '[r]e-examine existing and required training for all prescribed workforces and use this to inform longer term planning for workforce training'

- '[f]urther consider what is required to embed MARAM capability among prescribed workforces including through … additional strategies to incentivise phase 2 workforces[306] to engage in training, build their family violence capability and see the inherent value in doing so' and provide every prescribed organisation with 'some form of dedicated support' for MARAM alignment

- ensure training and communication for education workforces builds 'an awareness of what the MARAM Framework is and what it means for staff, and clearly articulate[s] how it intersects with and differs from existing initiatives and systems.'[307]

There is benefit to the Victorian Government publicly reporting against these proposals.

> **FINDING 26:** Increased training for early identification points across mainstream and universal workforces will strengthen data collection about people who use family violence. Training on how to identify family violence and collect data about it is especially important because if the question is not asked, the data is not collected.

> **RECOMMENDATION 18:** The Victorian Government embed the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework, and improve data collection on people who use family violence, across early identification points in mainstream and universal services, including through enhanced training and education.

> **RECOMMENDATION 19:** The Victorian Government publicly report by 30 June 2026 on actions taken in response to the proposals in the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's report *Early identification of family violence within universal services* (2022).

2.2.2 Build on initiatives in the alcohol and other drug and health sectors

The AOD sector plays an important role in identifying and responding to family violence, with the risk of substance use and perpetration of family violence often co-occurring.[308] Many AOD organisations have implemented MARAM, FVISS and CISS

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306 Phase 2 workforces include schools, kindergartens, day care, community health, public and publicly funded health services, hospitals, early parenting centres, GPs and nurses. Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms: Early identification of family violence within universal services*, 2022, p. 9.

307 Ibid., p. 7.

308 Meg Bagnall, Lead AOD and Family Violence, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, *Submission 22*, p. 3.

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processes and training to meet data collection and sharing requirements.[309] This has enhanced the sector's capacity to respond to family violence, ensure an effective and coordinated approach to risk assessment and management, collect data accurately and share information efficiently and appropriately.[310]

In 2017, the Victorian Government established a Specialist Family Violence Advisor (SFVA) capacity building program for mental health and AOD services.[311] SFVAs embed family violence expertise in these sectors, 'support continuous improvement, lead system and practice change, and build sector capacity and capability to identify, assess, and respond to family violence'.[312] The AOD sector recently completed a project to embed screening and assessment questions about people who use family violence in existing tools. Once live, this will provide valuable data on people who use family violence.[313]

The health sector plays an important role in identifying and responding to family violence. Hospitals and health sectors frequently have contact with people who use family violence who do not engage with other services.[314] In 2014 and 2015 the Victorian Government funded the SHRFV program to embed practices for identifying and responding to family violence in hospitals. It included eight leads across Victoria to embed SHRFV, MARAM, FVISS and CISS in regional health services.[315] This was a discrete program and funding ceased on 1 July 2024, but continuing it would assist in building capacity to identify and respond to family violence.[316] For example, the National Ageing Research Institute (NARI) reported that health and aged care workers may not feel comfortable screening for elder abuse.[317]

In 2023, the Victorian Government funded a SHRFV Working with adults who use Family Violence—Emerging Practice State-wide Lead (SHRFV Lead) role to consult on and identify MARAM alignment implementation requirements and develop resources and support for health services. This aims to increase identification of adults who use family violence.[318]

Expanding and integrating SFVAs, the SHRFV program and SHRFV Lead roles for services or practitioners in other sectors and regions could help build capacity to

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309   Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, *Submission 22*, p. 7.

310   Ibid.

311   Department of Health, *Specialist Family Violence Advisor program in mental health and alcohol and other drug services Victoria*, 1 July 2024, <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/specialist-family-violence-advisor-program-mental-health-alcohol-other-drug-services> accessed 29 November 2024.

312   Ibid.

313   Gillian Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

314   Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence State-wide Leadership Team, *Submission 47*, p. 4; Susan George, *Submission 55*, p. 1.

315   Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence State-wide Leadership Team, *Submission 47*, p. 1.

316   Renee Blight, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

317   National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, p. 3.

318   Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence State-wide Leadership Team, *Submission 47*, p. 1; Sharan Ermel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 11.

implement MARAM (including to identify and document risk) and provide specialist support, model best practice and promote consistency.[319]

FINDING 27: Supporting initiatives similar to the Specialist Family Violence Advisor program, and the Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence program and Practice Lead roles, in the health sector and other mainstream and universal services interacting with people who use family violence, could enable greater data collection about people using family violence. These initiatives could help build capacity to collect data through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework and provide specialist support, model best practice and promote consistent data collection.

RECOMMENDATION 20: The Victorian Government support roles similar to Specialist Family Violence Advisors and Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence Practice Leads, in the health sector and other mainstream and universal services interacting with people who use family violence.

2.2.3 Create opportunities to engage with private bodies

Better capturing data on people who use family violence through the private sector (for example, banks, workplaces, insurance and real estate agencies) can help form a fuller picture of people who use family violence by identifying people whose family violence has largely been hidden.[320] Any sharing of data by private bodies should have the victim survivor's consent where possible[321] and any linkage of public and private data should be meaningful.[322] While private bodies that identify people who use family violence may not be able to share information because of privacy legislation or because it is commercial in confidence,[323] agreements or codes of practice could improve data collection and sharing in and with the private sector.[324] Research could help understand what motivates the private sector to collect and share data on people who use family violence,[325] and the best engagement methods.

FINDING 28: Addressing limitations, like privacy and consent, to data collection and sharing about people who use family violence in and from the private sector (for example, banks, workplaces, insurance and real estate agencies) presents a significant opportunity to identify people whose violence is largely hidden and would help the Victorian Government to form a fuller picture of people who use family violence.

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319 Berry Street, *Submission 31*, pp. 5, 15; Berry Street, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 23 August 2024, p. 2; Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, response to questions on notice, p. 3; Sharan Ermel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14.

320 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 5–6.

321 Ben Rogers, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

322 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 6.

323 Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 5; State Trustees, *Submission 54*, received 13 June 2024, p. 4.

324 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 5.

325 Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

> **RECOMMENDATION 21:** The Victorian Government prioritise consultation on how to share information about family violence between public and private sectors, and how to best facilitate engagement with the private sector to collect and share data about people who use family violence.

2.2.4 Encourage early help seeking and address underreporting

Underreporting of family violence means publicly reported statistics are not accurately representative.[326] In Australia in 2021–22, 79% of women experiencing violence,[327] and 92% of women experiencing sexual violence, from a male partner did not report the most recent incident to police.[328] People may not report family violence for several reasons, for example, low trust in services.[329] See Background. People need to trust that when they reach out for help or report family violence, it will be 'worth it'[330] because there is a system in place to 'catch' them.[331]

Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to address underreporting included:

- **Build trust and safety to report**: Build trust by working with community-controlled organisations for culturally and linguistically diverse, First Nations, and LGBTIQA+ communities.[332] Marginalised communities may not feel safe given historic mistreatment or prior negative experiences.[333] It is important to have culturally appropriate responses and places where people feel safe.[334] Increase transparency about why data is being collected to build trust and data accuracy, so victim

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326 Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Respect Victoria, response to questions on notice, p. 5.

327 Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59; Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Partner violence*, 22 November 2023, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/partner-violence/2021-22> accessed 21 January 2025.

328 Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3. The Personal Safety Survey results show 8.3% of women who experienced sexual assault by a male contacted police, 92% did not. See Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Foundation for a national data collection and reporting framework for family, domestic and sexual violence*, 30 September 2014, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/crime-and-justice/foundation-national-data-collection-and-reporting-framework-family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/latest-release> accessed 8 April 2024.

329 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 12; Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, pp. 2–3; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 13; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 4; Flat Out and Police Accountability Project, *Submission 38*, p. 11, 16; Mystina McCabe, *Submission 2*, received 11 April 2024, p. 2; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 8; Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 7; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 19; Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, p. 6; Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 1; Cafs Ballarat, response to questions on notice, p. 1; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 32; Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, received 26 July 2024, p. 4; ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 7; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 3.

330 Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

331 Sheree Lowe, Executive Director of the Balit Durn Durn Centre, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, public hearing, Melbourne, 9 September 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12.

332 Thorne Harbour Health, response to questions on notice, p. 3; Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, pp. 3, 9; Sameera Fieldgrass, Practice Lader, Sector and Community Partnerships, Centre for Multicultural Youth, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 44.

333 Rebecca Buys, Head of Policy and Research, No to Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 54; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 1.

334 Sheree Lowe, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12.

survivors understand why information is requested.[335] Encourage informal disclosure settings where victim survivors feel more comfortable to report.[336]

- **Reduce stigma**: Reduce the stigma[337] associated with accessing services or the judgement people sometimes feel when accessing the service system.[338]

- **Increase awareness and education**: Increase awareness and educate Victorians about how to recognise and disclose family violence, including coercive control.[339] This includes education on elder abuse and affirmative consent laws where they relate to sexual violence.[340] Awareness and education would give people insight into how disclosures will be acted upon and how they would be supported, particularly if education is community-led.[341] Broader community awareness would help friends and family, and potentially neighbours and co-workers, to encourage people experiencing family violence to report and seek support when they witness or recognise family violence.[342]

The Victorian Government acknowledges 'growing community awareness and understanding of family violence … may contribute to increased reporting' in the *Free from violence: second action plan 2022–2025*. The plan identifies key improvement opportunities, including tailored campaigns for diverse communities and increased bystander engagement in primary prevention.[343] The outcomes in *Domain 1: Prevention Family violence and gender inequality are not tolerated* of the FVOF list an '[i]ncrease in people feeling able, safe and willing to report violence' and '[i]increased awareness of what constitutes violence'.[344] There are no measures or indicators in the FVOF Implementation Strategy to monitor this.[345]

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335 Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, pp. 3, 6; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, pp. 4–5; Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 5; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 16.

336 Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 8; Avital Kamil, Principal Lawyer, Seniors Rights Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26; Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, pp. 4, 13–14; Sheree Lowe, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12. The Centre for Multicultural Youth suggest an informal setting includes 'people who can relate to their experience, including peers and bicultural workers, and outside of more formal or 'clinical' settings'.

337 Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, pp. 2–3; Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 13; Settlement Services International, *Submission 13*, p. 1; Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 7; Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, p. 3; Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 49*, p. 1; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Cafs Ballarat, response to questions on notice, p. 1.

338 Sheree Lowe, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12.

339 State Trustees, *Submission 54*; National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, p. 3; Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, *Submission 36*, p. 5; MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 3; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Bec Wilkin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46.

340 Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, pp. 4, 13; Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

341 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 19; Avital Kamil, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26.

342 Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, Chairperson, Respect Victoria Board, Respect Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39; Sheree Lowe, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12.

343 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Free from violence: second action plan 2022–2025*, 2021, pp. 17, 28, 39.

344 The former is listed under the outcome 'Victorian homes, organisations and communities are safe and inclusive' and the latter under the outcome 'Victorians hold attitudes and beliefs that reject gender inequality and family violence'.

345 State of Victoria, *Family Violence Outcomes Framework Measurement and Monitoring Implementation Strategy*, p. 7.

FINDING 29: Underreporting of family violence means that publicly reported statistics are not accurately representative. Increasing trust in services and awareness about family violence would help encourage people to report family violence and seek help. Increasing reporting and awareness of family violence are listed in the Victorian Government's Family Violence Outcomes Framework. Continued investment in efforts to achieve these outcomes will help ensure data on people using family violence is accurately representative.

2.3 Improve family violence sector databases and systems

2.3.1 Recognise current limited database functionality

There is no systematic way to collect data on a person using family violence as they access different services offered by multiple organisations or multiple services within the same organisation.[346]

IRIS is inefficient and difficult to use.[347] IRIS cannot collect and store data collected through MARAM risk assessments[348] and demographic data is often recorded in free text[349] that is not easily retrievable.[350] SHIP has MARAM tools and data built in,[351] but it may be in a limited format that makes it difficult to extract and use[352] or to provide rich data.[353]

IRIS and SHIP databases are siloed and do not talk to each other (see Case Study 2.1), preventing timely and efficient information sharing and analysis of risk.[354] For example, sexual assault counselling and therapeutic services,[355] and people using family violence service providers[356] use IRIS, but family violence case management and victim survivor data is in SHIP.[357] Siloed databases mean a service provider or TOD may

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346 Meli, *Submission 7*, received 27 May 2024, p. 4; Kirsten Majidi, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 62; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 5.

347 Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 4; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 2; Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Bec Wilkin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

348 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 11; Bec Wilkin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48; Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 7.

349 Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 7.

350 Ibid.

351 Livia La Rocca, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60; Bec Wilkin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48. For more information, see State of Victoria and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Annual report on the implementation of the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework 2022–23*, p. 29.

352 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 11.

353 Livia La Rocca, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61. See Abbreviations and key terms in the preliminary pages of this report for definitions of IRIS, SHIP and MARAM.

354 Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 4; Fiona Bilucaglia, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33; Jane Hingston, Director, Perpetrator Programs and System Performance, Family Safety Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 67.

355 Lauren Famulari, Manager, Evidence and Strategic Advocacy, The Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 46, 48; The Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 27 August 2024, p. 1.

356 Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 4.

357 Lauren Famulari, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 46, 48.

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share information by PDF that is then manually entered into a service provider's own data system.[358] The information shared may be impartial or outdated, exacerbated by waitlists or delays to access services.[359]

> ### Case Study 2.1 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence—lack of sophisticated data collection systems
>
> 'At this stage, IRIS is unable to be used to collect and store MARAM Risk Assessments. SHIP can store MARAM Assessments, however, it is in a limited format making it difficult to extract and use. MARAM Assessments hold critical risk and safety information that is vital in managing safety of clients. Due to the lack of sophisticated data collection systems being made available to agencies, MARAM Risk Assessments are stored securely on inTouch's Sharepoint. Also, as they are stored separately by agencies, any updates are not visible by those who are co-case managing or needing updated risk information. The information collected and held in MARAM Assessments is unstructured data making it unusable from an effective data usage and management perspective'.
>
> Source: inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, received 31 May 2024, p. 11.

Victim survivor service providers collect and hold valuable information on people who use family violence, but currently this is not collated, extracted, linked or analysed to inform understanding of people who use family violence, policy and interventions.[360] For example, victim survivor services may not contribute information to government databases on people who use family violence[361] and data on people who use family violence cannot be extracted from SHIP.[362] Victim survivor service providers with information about people who use family violence may only record this on a victim survivor's file in case notes.[363] Data on relationships, types of family violence, patterns, prevalence, history and people who use family violence with multiple victims are not clearly visible when client files with the same person using family violence are not linked,[364] or are linked to a victim survivor file rather than the person using family violence's files.[365]

The potential of MARAM to support more accurate data collection may not be fully realised,[366] as it can be too time consuming and unwieldy to use,[367] meaning

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358 Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 2; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 66; Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 43–44.

359 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

360 McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, received 31 May 2024, pp. 4–5; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 1.

361 Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Fiona Bilucaglia, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33.

362 FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 1.

363 Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 8.

364 FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 1; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 3.

365 Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 4.

366 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 8.

367 Ibid., p. 7.

information on risk may not be recorded in databases like SHIP,[368] and instead stored as data or case notes in a service provider's own systems,[369] with updates invisible to others who need it.[370] This inhibits a shared understanding of family violence perpetration.[371] Free text, case notes, unstructured data fields, PDF scans or hard-copy data collected through MARAM risk assessments are not readily accessible[372] or extractable[373] and is caused by antiquated service provider and government data systems.[374] Even if extracted, case notes may be hard to compare or analyse.[375]

Limited database functionality prevents capture of data on dynamic risk.[376] Dynamic risk is a person using family violence's change in behaviour or circumstances, which impacts or increases the risk they pose to a victim survivor.[377] MARAM risk assessments are designed to be continually updated while client cases are open,[378] including by the service provider a person is referred to, rather than a new assessment conducted.[379]

One of the purposes of MARAM risk assessments is to 'understand the level of risk at a point in time and changes in risk over time (where ongoing assessment is being undertaken)'.[380] As MARAM risk assessments cannot be added easily and different data systems are not integrated,[381] service providers may not update the initial MARAM (often completed by TODs), instead recording updates in case notes,[382] or copying and pasting MARAM data into their own systems.[383] Limited database functionality also means when some new information, for example, address or relationship status, is entered into the data systems, it overwrites previous data rather than monitoring change over time.[384]

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368 Ibid.

369 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 11; Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 7; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 1; Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5.

370 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 11; Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 7.

371 Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 7.

372 Ibid., p. 5; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 11.

373 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

374 Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, pp. 5–6; Bec Wilkin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

375 Lauren Famulari, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 53–54.

376 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 8; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5; FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 1; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 4; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 19; Bec Wilkin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

377 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 8.

378 Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 58–59.

379 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 7; National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, received 30 May 2024, p. 1; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 66.

380 Victorian Government, *Practice guides: Responsibility 7: Comprehensive Risk Assessment*, 2020, p. 277.

381 Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 4.

382 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 7.

383 Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 66.

384 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 19, 22.

The Victorian Government is developing a business case to replace IRIS, Integrated Client Case Management System (ICCMS)[385] and other 'ancillary systems'.[386] The 2023–24 State Budget provided $14.4 million over two years for this,[387] and a Communities and Families Transformation Program was established in DFFH to 'drive the development of the business case and lead change across government and the sector to support the proposed technology replacement'.[388] The proposed replacement 'will be designed to support increased data and analytics capabilities … improved data collection, extraction and linkage across the sector, and enable more integrated and client centred care and improve client outcomes'.[389] The 'business case is intended to be considered through the 2025–26 State Budget process, or in future budget rounds'.[390] DFFH advised it will not publicly release the business case.[391]

2.3.2 Implement more centralised and useable databases

Increased database functionality can improve the use of existing data.[392] A key recommendation from Inquiry stakeholders was to create a centralised and systematic means to record data (including MARAM risk assessments) on people who use family violence (and potentially other parties like victim survivors and children)[393] as they access different services across multiple systems.[394] This includes behaviour and system engagement data to better integrate and manage risk and keep people who use family violence in view,[395] and should include data extraction functionality.[396] This will help:

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385 ICCMS includes CRIS, CRIS/SP and Front-End Reception Information System and is used by Child Protection, disability service providers, out-of-home care and Corrections Victoria youth justice. See Victorian Auditor-General's Office, *Quality of child protection data: Independent assurance report to Parliament*, 2022, p. 52.

386 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, written response to questions on notice, pp. 6–7.

387 Ibid., p. 6.

388 Ibid.

389 Ibid., p. 7.

390 Ibid., p. 6.

391 Ibid., p. 7.

392 Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59.

393 FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 3; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29.

394 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 5; Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 4; Bernadette McCartney, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 15; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, pp. 3, 7; National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, p. 5; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 14; FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 3; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 23, 27; Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26; Tracey Golder, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60; Max Broadley, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 34–35; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29; Australian Association for Restorative Justice, *Submission 10*, received 28 May 2024, p. 7.

395 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14; Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 4; Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 4. The Royal Commission into Family Violence recommended 'The Victorian Government examine options for the development of a single case-management data system to enable relevant agencies to view and share risk information in real time'. The Victorian Government advised this was implemented through the TOD CRM, but 'continued collaboration with relevant government and non-government organisations will assist in building our understanding of the information sharing needs within the family violence sector'. The Committee notes the TOD CRM is not accessible to other agencies outside the TOD network and does not facilitate real-time data sharing. Victorian Government, *Examine options for a single case-management data system*, 18 May 2020, <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-recommendations/examine-options-single-case-management-data-system> accessed 27 November 2024; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 17.

396 McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, p. 7.

- aggregate data across the service system and create a real-time, dynamic, consistent view of people who use family violence and behavioural profiles[397]

- triage risk, identify high-risk individuals,[398] understand an individual's system engagement and tactics of violence,[399] hold intelligence from current and past partners,[400] and hold people who use family violence accountable[401]

- link people together by relationship[402] or identify people who use violence against multiple victim survivors[403]

- show the life course of a person using family violence (for example, the services and support provided to them as children or young people)[404]

- sectors and service providers align to MARAM,[405] and easily capture and upload MARAM and other data that can be viewed, updated and extracted by relevant agencies[406]

- overcome needing to know which service provider to request data from,[407] and reduce double data entry[408] and inconsistent data entry practices[409]

- collect the right data, for example, on impact of supports[410]

- collate and extract data for research, analysis and service improvement and tailoring,[411] and better understand behaviours, patterns, service tolerance and risk[412] and how systems integrate[413]

- promote timely sharing of risk information[414] (see Section 2.4.1).

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397   Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, pp. 5–6; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 14; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 3; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25.

398   Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

399   Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 4.

400   Ibid., pp. 4–5.

401   Bernadette McCartney, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18.

402   Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

403   Elaine Williams, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35.

404   Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29.

405   Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

406   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, pp. 14–15, 17; Bernadette McCartney, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20; McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, p. 7.

407   Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 4.

408   Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 3; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 9; Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12.

409   Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 3; National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, p. 3; Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12.

410   Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5.

411   Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12; Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 8; Bernadette McCartney, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 17–18; Australian Association for Restorative Justice, *Submission 10*, p. 7.

412   Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 60; Bernadette McCartney, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18.

413   Ibid., p. 60; Bernadette McCartney, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

414   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 17.

A system or database like this would carry risks associated with systems abuse or misidentification,[415] and for people who are charged with a family violence offence but subsequently not convicted.[416] It should be developed in consultation with stakeholders,[417] embed Indigenous Data Sovereignty, recognise intersectionality,[418] and consider security and protection measures to control levels of access and sharing.[419] Developing this type of data infrastructure would be expensive and take time.[420]

FSV noted legacy databases are a barrier to data collection. While sufficient resourcing has not been available to consider the idea of a single database, FSV recognised it may be better to replace legacy systems than add data fields to standalone systems. For example, the TOD CRM was built to meet the needs of practitioners and holds rich data on both victim survivors and people who use family violence.[421]

FINDING 30: Service providers across multiple sectors sometimes operate in silos when it comes to what, when and how data captured on people using family violence is meaningfully collected, linked and shared. This means that some information is only accessible to certain services, making it challenging to see all the services someone is using and to track their movements through sectors and multiple relationships.

FINDING 31: A centralised and systematic means to record data on people who use family violence accessing different services across multiple systems would provide significant benefits. This includes creating a real-time, dynamic, consistent view of people and behavioural profiles, identifying people who use violence against multiple victim survivors, promoting accountability, enabling better research and analysis, and overcoming data collection and sharing barriers. For example, needing to know which service provider to request data from, untimely information sharing, double data entry and inconsistent data entry practices.

In the absence (or alongside) a centralised database, Inquiry stakeholders suggested:

- **Improve MARAM data capture and storage**: Improve recording of dynamic risk,[422] long-term patterns of coercive control, non-physical violence,[423] and behaviour against multiple partners through the MARAM framework and tools.[424] This includes by improving the storage of MARAM data captured at different points over time,[425]

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415 Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 4; McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, p. 7.

416 Jenny Hosking, Assistant Commissioner, Sentence Management, Corrections Victoria, Department of Justice and Community Safety, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25.

417 Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5.

418 Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

419 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 53; Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 64; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29.

420 Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 65.

421 Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 70; Jane Hingston, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 70.

422 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 8; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 5; National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, p. 1; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 4.

423 Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, pp. 4, 6.

424 Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 3.

425 The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 4.

developing 'trackable review processes' in MARAM tools that reflect dynamic risk,[426] or a mechanism to maintain continuous visibility of a person using family violence.[427]

- **Create a shared MARAM data system**: A shared MARAM data system accessible to all relevant services[428] would allow storage of completed MARAM risk assessments.[429] It could include a mechanism for service providers to record the information they already have access to,[430] for example, from victim survivor services records, allowing aggregation and analysis of the data they collect on people who use family violence in a systematic way.[431] This could be done by adding the MARAM Adult Using Family Violence Comprehensive Assessment Tool or additional data fields into SHIP (which FSV is scoping)[432] or other government-managed information and reporting systems,[433] or by digitising data collection processes.[434]

- **Improve database functionality**: Improve government databases interfaces to more easily enter information,[435] and capture data on diversity,[436] sexual violence[437] and things that service providers want recorded (to reduce the need for service providers to develop complementary data systems).[438] This would help minimise double data entry and manual data extraction.[439] For example, Corrections Victoria has improved database functionality by creating new 'victim survivor' and 'perpetrator' flags (expected to go live in 2025) in its information systems to keep perpetrators of family violence in sight and collect better data.[440]

- **Create overlays**: Where databases cannot be easily updated—for example SHIP, which is a federal system—find more useable systems that overlay databases and distribute information.[441] For example, see Case Study 2.2.

- **Consider a disclosure scheme**: Implement a Victorian family violence disclosure scheme.[442]

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426   Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 5.

427   Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

428   Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 44.

429   Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35.

430   Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 12; Jac Dwyer, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 52–53.

431   Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 13; McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, p. 6.

432   Victorian Government, *MARAM tools in TRAM and SHIP: Quarter 4 2023–24*, 3 September 2024, <https://www.vic.gov.au/maramis-quarterly-newsletter-quarter-4-2023-24/maram-tools-tram-and-ship> accessed 27 November 2024.

433   Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 14; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 14.

434   Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 43.

435   Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

436   National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 5.

437   Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5.

438   Ibid.; Tracey Golder, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52.

439   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 7; Tracey Golder, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52.

440   Jenny Hosking, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 20, 25.

441   Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52; Darrylin Galanos, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52.

442   Teal Bubb, *Submission 44*, received 31 May 2024, p. 2; Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 1. The extent to which disclosure schemes achieve intended objectives is the 'subject of considerable debate'. For more information on disclosure schemes, including past inquiries and trials, see Kate Fitz-Gibbon, Ellen Reeves and Sandra Walklate, 'Domestic violence disclosure schemes: Policy overview', *Monash University*, vol. 1, 2023.

Any efforts to redevelop or design Victorian family violence databases or systems should consider these suggestions, and include consultation with the people they are designed to collect data about,[443] ACCOs[444] and the service providers inputting data.[445]

💡 Case Study 2.2   Berry Street—streamlining disparate databases

Berry Steet is a large provider of specialist family violence support services in Victoria.

Berry Street uses the following five databases:

- CRM, Berry Street's client record management system.

- IRIS, for people using family violence and therapeutic family violence programs, which was designed as a child and family services database.

- SHIP, for the bulk of specialist family violence services, which was designed for homelessness and has MARAM inbuilt.

- RISS, the information sharing system for RAMP data.

- DEX, the data exchange resource to report to the Australian Department of Social Services funding stream.

Berry Street has commenced a project to integrate these databases:

'… we have this kind of disparate bunch of databases that we are reporting to. All of them capture some information on perpetrator data and do not really speak to each other …'

'… we have just recently done a client management uplift project to be able to move all of our programs onto one platform … trying to bring together all of our services recording similar information …'

Source: Tom Bowerman, Acting Executive Director, Services, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence,* pp. 47–48; Darrylin Galanos, Acting Manager, Client Analytics and Reporting, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence,* p. 52; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, received 31 May 2024, p. 13.

FSV acknowledged it can work with service providers where current databases cannot be replaced or meaningfully enhanced. This includes better understanding challenges in using existing systems and current processes, and ensuring changes do not create an

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443   Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 2.

444   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 7.

445   Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 7; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 7.

additional administrative burden for service providers.[446] See Part 1, Section 1.4 on how the Victorian Government can obtain feedback from service providers on data usage and purpose.[447]

FINDING 32: Opportunities to improve recording of data on people who use family violence in Victoria to provide better visibility and data on dynamic risk and patterns of coercive control, non-physical violence and family violence against multiple partners include:

- improving the storage of dynamic Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) data captured at different points over time

- creating a shared system to upload MARAM risk assessments

- creating system overlays for outdated databases

- improving MARAM tools in the Specialist Homelessness Information Platform and other information and reporting systems.

FINDING 33: Opportunities to improve current Victorian Government family violence data systems include exploring ways to minimise the number of times service providers supply or analyse data, allow interfaces to more easily enter information and capture data on diversity, sexual violence, and information relevant to service providers.

RECOMMENDATION 22: The Victorian Government business case to redevelop the Integrated Report and Information System and other systems:

- include consultation with service providers and peak bodies on key requirements for efficient data capture (including the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework risk assessments), storage and sharing to support a fuller and more accurate picture of people who use family violence

- meaningfully build on and bring together current and disparate databases used to collect data on people using family violence, to reduce the administrative burden and maintain the utility of existing data.

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446   Jane Hingston, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 70–71.

447   Ibid.

Expand Tools for Risk Assessment and Management

TRAM is an online data system with inbuilt MARAM tools.[448] Not all MARAM tools are in TRAM yet[449] (although FSV plans for it to host MARAM resources currently in development), but it includes a MARAM Adult Using Family Violence Comprehensive Assessment Tool which 'uses information sharing, direct assessment, self-reporting and structured analysis to support practitioners to determine the level of risk'.[450] TRAM collects data on demographics, risk factors, risk characteristics and family violence presentations. TRAM data is used to better understand family violence risk and systemic practice issues.[451]

TRAM supports dynamic risk assessment by allowing practitioners to pre-populate assessment tools for subsequent assessments, enabling 'quicker assessment of how risk changes or escalates over time'.[452] TRAM streamlines processes and ensures data collection consistency for TODs.[453] Rolling TRAM out to more service providers and across the community sector would help realise these benefits.[454]

There may be confusion among service providers about availability of TRAM.[455] A 2023 Victorian Government source notes TRAM is available for TODs and 'a select number of specialist family violence and generalist agencies for risk assessment and safety planning'.[456] This includes 'specialist perpetrator intervention services' who have been onboarded.[457] A 2024 Victorian Government source notes:

- TRAM is available 'for use across the service system' and 'FSV supports new services wanting to adopt the use of TRAM to support their risk assessment and management practice'

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448 State of Victoria and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Annual report on the implementation of the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework 2022–23*, p. 29.

449 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 15. TRAM currently contains 'the adult and child victim survivor MARAM risk assessments and safety plan, Comprehensive Adult Using Family Violence assessment tool, Predominant Aggressor Identification tool'. Victorian Government, *MARAM tools in TRAM and SHIP*.

450 Victorian Government, *MARAM Tools in TRAM: Comprehensive Adults Using Violence Assessment Tool: Quarter 2 2022–23*, 1 March 2023, <https://www.vic.gov.au/maramis-quarterly-newsletter-quarter-2-2022-23/maram-tools-tram-comprehensive-adults-using> accessed 29 November 2024.

451 Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59.

452 Family Safety Victoria, response to questions on notice, p. 3.

453 Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, pp. 4–5. See also, Victorian Government, *MARAM tools in TRAM and SHIP*.

454 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 15.

455 For example, Safe and Equal noted in this Inquiry that 'TRAM access is limited exclusively to TOD practitioners'. See Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, pp. 4–5.

456 State of Victoria and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Annual report on the implementation of the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework 2022–23*, p. 29.

457 Victorian Government, *MARAM Tools in TRAM: Comprehensive Adults Using Violence Assessment Tool: Quarter 2 2022–23*; Victorian Government, *MARAM Tools in TRAM: Comprehensive Adults Using Violence Assessment Tool: Quarter 1 2022–23*, 24 November 2022, <https://www.vic.gov.au/maramis-quarterly-newsletter-quarter-1-2022-23/maram-tools-tram-comprehensive-adults-using-violence> accessed 29 November 2024.

- FSV 'runs onboarding and training sessions with agency leaders and practitioners on how to use TRAM' and if 'agencies want to discuss TRAM or adopt its use' they can email FSV.[458]

FINDING 34: Tools for Risk Assessment and Management, an online data system with inbuilt Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework tools available across the service system, streamlines processes and supports data collection consistency and dynamic and quicker risk assessment by allowing practitioners to pre-populate assessment tools for subsequent assessments.

RECOMMENDATION 23: The Victorian Government better promote the ability of service providers to adopt the Tools for Risk Assessment and Management online data system with inbuilt Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework tools, including the Adult Using Family Violence Comprehensive Assessment Tool.

Support service provider databases holistically and systematically

Despite MARAM data offering potentially valuable insight, limited data extraction capabilities make it difficult to use the data to build understanding of family violence dynamics, and profiles and behaviours of people who use family violence.[459]

Service provider or program databases have limited and disparate functionality to extract and analyse de-identified data to understand trends and provide service level or cross-sector insights.[460] Community-based service providers have limited resources and rely on manual and untimely data extraction from client files.[461] Some service providers extract data from case notes and collate it in spreadsheets.[462]

Inquiry stakeholder suggestions included:

- **Improve extraction and analysis functionality**: Invest in database upgrades with extraction and analysis functionality[463] and provide a systemised way for smaller services to organise and analyse data.[464] Ensure service providers have the

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458 Victorian Government, *MARAM tools in TRAM and SHIP: Quarter 3 2023–24*, 12 June 2024, <https://www.vic.gov.au/maramis-quarterly-newsletter-quarter-3-2023-24/maram-tools-tram-and-ship> accessed 27 November 2024; Victorian Government, *MARAM tools in TRAM and SHIP*.

459 Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, p. 1; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, pp. 1, 3; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 8; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 8.

460 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 14; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 8; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 1; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 8.

461 Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, pp. 4, 6; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 2; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 1.

462 Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 1; Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 3; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

463 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 14; Tracey Golder, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 12.

464 Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 8.

infrastructure, tools, systems, processes, resources and expertise to extract, analyse and report data,[465] including case notes and qualitative data.[466]

- **Support service provider databases**: Support service providers to develop a single case management system,[467] improve in-house data management systems[468] and case management tools.[469] With improved systems, service providers can use data to better understand client cohorts and tailor services.[470]

- **Be holistic and strategic**: Adopt a strategic investment approach to improving database and data system capability of service providers,[471] for example, through the Victorian Government's Empowerment Fund.[472] This includes whole-scale investment in digital solutions and tools to improve service provider data collection systems.[473] Improvements to individual databases should be accompanied by a shared data system or platform.[474]

It takes significant time, resources and costs to upgrade both government and service provider databases and data systems,[475] including as data complexity increases.[476] The Victorian Government should resource or invest in service providers' data infrastructure to support effective and functional data systems,[477] and fund data system development, maintenance and reform.[478]

> **FINDING 35:** A holistic and strategic approach to improving service providers' databases and data system capabilities through digital solutions that support improved extraction and analysis functionality is required to better organise, extract, and analyse risk assessment data and case notes to help build understanding of family violence dynamics, profiles and behaviours of people who use family violence.

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465   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 17; Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 53.

466   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 8.

467   Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 3.

468   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 7.

469   Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, p. 1.

470   YSAS, *Submission 9*, p. 5.

471   Matt Tyler, Executive Director, Community and Systems Impact, Jesuit Social Services, pubic hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 19–20; Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, p. 1; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 14.

472   Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 19–20. The Empowerment Fund aims 'to address barriers the social service sector faces relating to data and evaluation capability, and enable greater sharing of useful evaluation findings and improved data collection and management processes'. See Department of Treasury and Finance, *Empowerment Fund*, 2024, <www.dtf.vic.gov.au/empowerment-fund> accessed 16 December 2024.

473   Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, p. 1.

474   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 14.

475   Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 65; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9.

476   Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9.

477   Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 7; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 7; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, pp. 13–14.

478   Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 5.

> **RECOMMENDATION 24:** The Victorian Government explore ways to holistically and systematically upgrade service providers' databases to organise, extract and analyse data about people using family violence, including by supporting service providers to develop enhanced case or data management systems and tools.

2.3.3   Improve data systems linkage

Better linking existing data systems can facilitate more efficient and effective information sharing, risk analysis and management.[479] For example, linking the data system used by an organisation's family violence services to the data system that is used by the same organisation's non-specialist family violence services, could provide increased awareness of 'perpetrators that may be living within families and relationships'.[480]

Bridging systems with modern interfaces can improve visibility of a client's journey,[481] and allow for more strategic questions that build on each other to elaborate on risk factors.[482] It can also reduce the potential for data loss, the inaccurate transfer of data,[483] the administrative burden for service providers,[484] additional reporting requirements,[485] data inconsistencies,[486] how often victim survivors retell their stories,[487] and the risk of privacy or security breaches.[488] More integrated databases will help link de-identified data for research and analysis.[489] See Part 4, Section 4.1.5.

Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to support data integration and linkage included:

- **Better integrate data systems**: Better integrate and link existing databases and data collection systems[490] including by providing support for service providers to link data sets,[491] or system overlays (like a CRM) to connect and aggregate information.[492] Improve database interoperability and create mechanisms for

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479   Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 50; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 5; Max Broadley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 14; Vivienne Nguyen, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 45; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 7; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9.

480   Meli, *Submission 7*, pp. 3–4.

481   Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52.

482   Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22.

483   Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 14.

484   Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 7.

485   Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9.

486   Ibid.

487   Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22.

488   Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52.

489   Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9.

490   Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 7; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 2; ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 6; Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 63; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 5.

491   Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 5.

492   Kirsten Majidi, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 65; Lauren Famulari, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 47; Bec Wilkin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

existing data platforms to share data like MARAM risk assessments and FVISS requests.[493]

- **Promote consistency and comparability**: Use unique identifiers and promote standardised data collection practices.[494] See Section 2.1.1.

- **Explore new technology**: In a regulated and systematic way,[495] explore new technology like machine learning, artificial intelligence, advanced data analytics or Application Programming Interfaces that assist with data collection, storage, linkage and extraction.[496] Investment in technology can help make better use of existing datasets,[497] efficiently refer people to support, analyse data to identify patterns and predict high-risk perpetrators or situations, and promote early intervention and real-time information sharing.[498]

> **FINDING 36:** Better linking existing data systems can facilitate more efficient and effective information sharing and risk analysis and management, and improve visibility of system journeys for victim survivors and people who use family violence. Improving data systems linkage can reduce the potential for data loss, inaccurate transfer of data, the administrative burden for service providers, additional reporting requirements, data inconsistencies, how often victim survivors retell their stories and the risk of privacy or security breaches. Applying this approach across all the findings and recommendations made in this Inquiry report is important to ensure the benefits of technology are considered in any government actions taken in response to the report.

> **RECOMMENDATION 25:** The Victorian Government work to better align existing datasets, and integrate and link existing government and service provider databases and data systems, for example through system overlays to connect and aggregate information and improved database interoperability to share data like Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management risk assessments and Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme requests directly between databases.

2.3.4 Improve data sharing between agencies, courts and service providers

Inquiry stakeholders identified areas for improving data linkage and information sharing between courts, TODs, Victoria Police and service providers. For example:

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493 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 14; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 5; Vivienne Nguyen, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 45; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

494 Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9.

495 Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46.

496 National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, pp. 3–4; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 5; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 7; Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46; Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22.

497 Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59.

498 Ibid.; National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, pp. 3–4; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 5; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 7; Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46; Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; STARvibe Technology, *Submission 72*, received 18 September 2024, pp. 3, 5.

- MCV does not provide specialist family violence service providers with a list of intervention orders being heard each day. The quickest way for service providers to learn an FVIO outcome for a client is to attend court or submit a FVISS request that is not instantaneous.[499] Where an address of a person using family violence is not recorded on a bail undertaking, when they are released, their location is unknown.[500]

- There are sometimes communication breakdowns between Child Protection, and victim survivor and people using family violence service providers.[501]

- Collaboration between Victoria Police, TODs and people using family violence services can improve,[502] for example, by closing the referral loop between Victoria Police and TODs to provide Victoria Police with greater information about people who use family violence and their connection to supports.[503]

- Corrections Victoria 'does not automatically notify family violence services of changes to a prisoner's release date'. Instead, this can be requested through FVISS.[504]

Court Services Victoria and MCV are progressively implementing a new case management system, as recommended by the Royal Commission into Family Violence, although this has not yet occurred in the Family Violence Division.[505] Victoria Police is a stakeholder in the project and advised this will improve how Court and Victoria Police systems integrate,[506] as will Victoria Police's improvements to intervention order visibility across Victoria, enabling more auditing and monitoring.[507]

MCV's Family Violence Coordination Tool allows authorised stakeholders (from the Court, Victoria Police, TODs and legal services) to view and share case-related information,[508] which has 'improved pre-court preparations and reduced fragmentation in information sharing and supports to court users'.[509]

Inquiry stakeholders suggested exploring automated information sharing between the justice system and specialist family violence service providers, for example, automated data sharing when an FVIO is breached,[510] and better linking Victoria Police, courts, Corrections Victoria and Child Protection data systems.[511]

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499   Fiona Bilucaglia, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33; Lisa Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

500   Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 5.

501   Ibid., p. 4.

502   Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

503   Lauren Callaway, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 23–24.

504   Corrections Victoria, *Family violence initiatives*, 5 September 2024, <https://www.corrections.vic.gov.au/family-violence-initiatives> accessed 29 November 2024.

505   Magistrates' Court of Victoria, response to written questions on notice, p. 5; Lauren Callaway, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; See recommendation 81, Victorian Government, *Ensure family violence offences are appropriately 'flagged': Recommendation 081*, 23 September 2021, <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-recommendations/ensure-family-violence-offences-are-appropriately-flagged> accessed 14 January 2025.

506   Lauren Callaway, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22.

507   Ibid.; Claire Waterman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22.

508   Magistrates' Court of Victoria, response to written questions on notice, pp. 5, 7.

509   Ibid., p. 5.

510   No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 12.

511   Bernadette McCartney, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

FINDING 37: Enabling automated information sharing between Victoria Police, the Magistrates' Court of Victoria, Corrections Victoria, The Orange Door Network and specialist family violence service providers will improve efficient and timely information sharing and service provision. For example, by providing a list of all family violence intervention order matters to be heard in court each day and improving visibility over whether a person using family violence completes a program across the system.

RECOMMENDATION 26: The Victorian Government explore automated information sharing about people using family violence or better linkage between agency and service provider databases.

2.3.5 Expand and improve the Central Information Point

CIP is an innovative and pioneering initiative.[512] It provides extensive and more consistent pattern, behaviour and history data about a person using family violence in a consolidated report that is critical to support risk assessment and management.[513] Child Protection, Court Services Victoria, Victoria Police and Corrections Victoria provide data to the CIP (known as 'data custodians').[514] The CIP technology platform is integrated with these agencies' databases and systems, and information is compiled manually to ensure compliance with policy and legislation.[515] TODs, RAMPs, the Men's Referral Service (at No to Violence) and Safe Steps can request CIP reports.[516]

Other service providers, including for people using family violence, must request CIP data from TODs. TODs then request a CIP report and assess the information for risk relevancy before providing it back to the service provider.[517] Inquiry stakeholders reported this is a slow, burdensome and complex process that negatively impacts the safety of women[518] and the provision of timely and risk-informed support to people who use family violence.[519] Often CIP reports provided to service providers who support people using family violence contain redacted information and are incomplete due to inconsistent understandings of risk-relevant information.[520] TODs can only request CIP reports for people who use family violence initially referred by TODs to a service

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512 Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 50.

513 Jane Hingston, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 66.

514 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *2024–25 Budget Estimates questionnaire*, report for Public Accounts and Estimates Committee, 2024, p. 117; Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 58; Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Glossary of key terms and abbreviations*, 18 August 2023, <https://www.fvrim.vic.gov.au/legislative-review-family-violence-information-sharing-and-risk-management/glossary-key-terms> accessed 3 May 2024.

515 Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 58.

516 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *2024–25 Budget Estimates questionnaire*, p. 117; Jane Hingston, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 65.

517 Olsen Clark, Policy and Advocacy Advisor, No to Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

518 Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 2; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 8.

519 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 12; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 19; Olsen Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

520 Olsen Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

provider or who are linked to a victim survivor that is a TOD client.[521] This means where people seek support directly from a service provider rather than a TOD, access to CIP data is limited.[522] For some service providers who support people using family violence, only 10% of their clients have been referred to TODs.[523]

The 2023 FVRIM review[524] found CIP effectively supported requesters to assess and manage risk, but:

- 'the delayed delivery of CIP reports impacts negatively on their effectiveness'—recommending to amend the FVP Act 'to require the CIP to respond to CIP requests within a reasonable timeframe'

- 'CIP reports provide less information relevant to risk assessment and management than in the past and that some inconsistencies exist between reports'—suggesting 'a continued focus in ongoing discussions between the CIP data custodians and [FSV] on developing a shared understanding of information that is relevant'

- 'limited access to CIP reports affects the service response for some victim survivors who do not access services through [TOD] or other CIP requesters'—suggesting 'consideration of expanding access to CIP reports to services that support family violence victim survivors who may be unlikely to access mainstream, government-led programs'

- 'the CIP is not meeting its purpose of providing updated information about perpetrators to CIP requesters' when it 'received new relevant information about perpetrators for whom they had already provided CIP reports'—suggesting the Victorian Government continue 'to look for opportunities to collect and share updated risk-relevant information with CIP requesters in appropriate cases'.[525]

The Victorian Government response (August 2023) outlined it 'will consider options to support timely sharing of information' including recognising timeliness in legislation and 'alternative approaches to achieve timely responses to CIP requests'. The Victorian Government also noted it 'is progressing technical and practice changes aimed at improving timeliness in the provision of information' with further options to 'be considered based on the outcomes of the CIP Program Evaluation'.[526]

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521 Ibid.

522 Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

523 Olsen Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

524 The *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) requires that independent reviews of Parts 5A and 11 be conducted for the first two and five years of FVISS's operation. The FVRIM report is the five-year review, which focused on the legal framework and not implementation. Victorian Government, *Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme reviews*, 8 November 2023, <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-information-sharing-scheme-review> accessed 21 November 2024; Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Legislative review of family violence information sharing and risk management: reviewing the effectiveness of Parts 5A and 11 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)*, p. 1.

525 It also recommended the FVP Act is updated 'to include factors for the CIP to consider in determining what constitutes a reasonable timeframe'. Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Legislative review of family violence information sharing and risk management: reviewing the effectiveness of Parts 5A and 11 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)*, pp. 3–4.

526 Victorian Government, *Government Response: Legislative review of Parts 5A and 11 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)*, pp. 11–12.

Deloitte conducted this evaluation in 2023[527] to review CIP's effectiveness, impact and areas for improvement, and to recommend how CIP outputs could best be delivered.[528] DFFH noted that as the evaluation was part 'of a business case prepared for Cabinet consideration, this is Cabinet in Confidence'.[529]

On 30 May 2024, the Victorian Government announced it would 'improve and upgrade' CIP, 'making the system easier and faster to use'.[530] Funding to support this is primarily for technology enhancements, improved operational reporting (for example, number of requests and timeliness in responding) and scoping potential data automation.[531]

FSV advised CIP reports must also be accompanied by MARAM and FVISS to ensure information is collected and used appropriately.[532] FSV also advised it may be difficult to expand CIP due to demand, as a higher volume of requests will impact the timeliness of CIP reports.[533] Instead, the CIP system is designed so information flows from TODs to other entities through FVISS.[534] However, Inquiry stakeholder and FVRIM evidence indicates these information flows are not always timely nor comprehensive.

Expanding CIP would facilitate more informed and impactful services,[535] create greater awareness about historic and current family violence,[536] reduce the time service providers wait before receiving information,[537] and reduce the number of times victim survivors retell their stories.[538] Inquiry stakeholders supported:

- expanding CIP access[539] to all Tier 1 workforces,[540] which includes all specialist services for victim survivors and people who use family violence[541]

- expanding CIP access to nominated staff in the health sector[542]

- reducing the duplication of information sharing via the CIP and FVISS[543]

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527 Victorian Government, *Government response to the five-year legislative review*, 18 August 2023, <https://www.vic.gov.au/government-response-five-year-legislative-review> accessed 29 November 2024; Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *2024–25 Budget Estimates questionnaire*, p. 87.

528 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Annual report 2023–24*, 2024, p. 112.

529 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *2024–25 Budget Estimates questionnaire*, p. 87.

530 Premier of Victoria, *Changing laws and culture to save women's lives*, media release, 30 May 2024.

531 Jane Hingston, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 66.

532 Ibid.

533 Ibid., p. 65.

534 Ibid.

535 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 12.

536 Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 5.

537 Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

538 Ibid., p. 52.

539 Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 17; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 4; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 2; Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

540 Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 4; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 8. For a list of Tier 1 organisations, see Family Safety Victoria, *Responding to Family Violence Capability Framework*, p. 14.

541 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 22; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 7; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 3; Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52; Elaine Williams, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34; Phillip Ripper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46.

542 Peninsula Health, *Submission 32*, p. 2; Renee Blight, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 13; Amanda Morris, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 13.

543 Jenny Hosking, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23.

- improving accuracy of CIP data[544] (due to misidentification, see *Prioritise rectification processes to correct misidentification* above)

- including in CIP reports, national and interstate data,[545] intersectional demographic data,[546] and data on people using family violence's systems involvement, engagement with non-government entities[547] and tolerance and consumption of services[548]

- greater resourcing for CIP to respond promptly to requests, and to process and update data[549] and consider operational efficiencies[550]—particularly important if CIP access is expanded[551]

- training for specialist family violence services staff to accompany CIP expansion[552]

- ensuring increased CIP access does not jeopardise the safety of victim survivors by establishing processes to safeguard against collected information being used for criminal proceedings.[553]

To promote accountability, continuing to publicly report on CIP improvements and the outcomes they achieve is important. For example, in MARAM annual reports.[554]

FINDING 38: Expanding the information included in Central Information Point (CIP) reports and the number of service providers who can access CIP reports would facilitate more informed and impactful services, create greater awareness about historic and current family violence, reduce the time service providers wait before receiving information, and reduce the number of times victim survivors retell their stories.

RECOMMENDATION 27: The Victorian Government consider rolling out access to Central Information Point (CIP) reports to all Tier 1 workforces, and seek to include in CIP reports additional national and interstate data, intersectional demographic data, and data on how people using family violence engage with the service system, non-government entities, and tolerance and consumption of services.

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544 Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 4.

545 Ibid.; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

546 Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 4.

547 Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 4.

548 Ibid.

549 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 8; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 12; Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

550 Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

551 Ibid.

552 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 12.

553 Ibid.

554 See for example, State of Victoria and Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Annual report on the implementation of the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework 2022–23*, pp. 9, 31. DFFH reported it had expanded CIP to Safe Steps and Men's Referral Service and delivered 20,230 reports from April 2013 to June 2023.

2.4 Improve family violence information sharing and collaboration

FVISS and CISS have improved information sharing between organisations and the identification of people who use family violence accessing different systems.[555] The TOD Network has also improved the visibility of people who use family violence, including those not in contact with police, and timely and easy information gathering to increase safety for victim survivors.[556] However, what and how much data is shared remains inconsistent.[557] For example:

- MARAM and FVISS place limits on what can be shared between Risk Assessment Entities (RAEs) and ISEs.[558] A RAE service (for adult victim survivors) and an ISE service (for youth) within the same organisation will have access to different levels of information, and RAEs may not be able to share information with ISEs.[559] This prevents consistent and client-centred service provision,[560] and the ability to gain a complete understanding of a person's points of system contact.[561]

- Service providers that create comprehensive profiles of people who use family violence may assess risk differently, potentially resulting in disconnected profiles and levels of information sharing.[562] Low understanding of what information is risk relevant impacts levels of information sharing (see FVRIM finding below).[563]

- While detailed information is shared about people charged with criminal family violence offences, less information is accessible for those not engaged with the police or criminal justice system.[564]

- TODs and family violence practitioners have access to more data about people using family violence than other workforces.[565]

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555 Cindy Cavanagh-Knez, Team Leader, Zoe Support Australia, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 32; Fiona Bilucaglia, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33; Amy Cupper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34; Bernadette McCartney, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20; Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35.

556 Amy Cupper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 32.

557 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 13; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 2; Sameera Fieldgrass, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 43; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 4; McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, p. 7; ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 5.

558 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 13.

559 Ibid.; Sameera Fieldgrass, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 43.

560 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 13.

561 Ibid.

562 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 8.

563 Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 6.

564 MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 3.

565 Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 17.

- Responses to FVISS requests are often dependent on individuals, relationships and email communications,[566] with some people sharing more information than others.[567] Agencies also have different information request processes.[568]

- Information sharing from TODs to other services, and between services, may not always be timely and efficient[569] when service providers experience delayed responses to information requests.[570] As MARAM implementation grows, there needs to be capacity to respond to increased information requests.[571]

Case Study 2.3 demonstrates some challenges of inaccurate, untimely and inconsistent data collection and sharing.

The 2023 FVRIM review found similar inconsistencies, including:

- 'increased practitioner confidence in requesting and disclosing information', but 'practitioner confusion and uncertainty' about what is 'relevant' information

- the FVISS Ministerial Guidelines were 'difficult to navigate' and 'not readily understood by some practitioners'

- while information sharing in response to FVISS requests had increased, proactive or voluntary sharing had not to the extent that it should have (see Section 2.4.2)

- some agencies' FVISS request processes (for example, requiring a service provider to fill out a form) sometimes contributed to information sharing delays

- ISEs were 'not always sharing perpetrators' confidential information in a way that support[ed] victim survivor knowledge and agency'.[572]

FVRIM recommended the Victorian Government:

- update the FVISS Ministerial Guidelines to 'increase utility and improve understanding', 'highlight the ability of ISEs to voluntarily share relevant information with other services and provide further guidance on when and how to do so' (which would also 'strengthen collaborative and coordinated practice', see Section 2.4.3), 'emphasise the importance of sharing information in a timely manner and include guidance on responding to requests within a reasonable timeframe', and 'incorporate information from the MARAM Framework on victim survivor agency and self-assessment of risk'[573]

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566   Karen Todd, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34.

567   Lisa Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 18–19.

568   Bec Wilkin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

569   Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 8; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 5; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20; Amy Cupper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39; Kirsten Majidi, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 62; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 66.

570   Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 15.

571   Ibid, pp. 15–16.

572   Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Legislative review of family violence information sharing and risk management: reviewing the effectiveness of Parts 5A and 11 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)*, pp. 1–3.

573   Ibid.

- amend the FVP Act 'to require ISEs to respond to a request within a reasonable timeframe'.[574]

The Victorian Government response (August 2023) to the 2023 FVRIM review outlined a review of the FVISS Ministerial Guidelines, planned to be completed by 2025–26, 'will consider how to strengthen content on proactive information sharing' and 'will make amendments to strengthen the emphasis on timely information sharing'. It also advised that the Victorian Government will consider 'further mechanisms to reinforce the importance of timely information sharing to [ISEs], including through a case study example', '[o]ther mechanisms … to provide more guidance to promote proactive information sharing' and 'legislative change to recognise the importance of timeliness'.[575]

2.4.1 Implement consistent, timely and efficient information sharing

Inquiry stakeholders supported implementing a consistent, statewide and multi-sector approach to sharing information about people who use family violence.[576] Increasing levels and availability of this information would improve visibility of patterns of perpetration, including against multiple victim survivors,[577] and dynamic risk management.[578] Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to achieve this included:

- **Develop an integrated and secure information sharing system**: Implement and invest in integrated and secure data repositories to facilitate real-time information sharing and collaboration within and between service providers, and the capacity to identify 'red flags' and plan service delivery (like Child Protection and TODs already have).[579] It could include a data or IT system for FVISS requests for different sectors, like hospitals or schools, to create consistency and transparency around who is responding to requests and what information they are providing.[580]

- **Build understanding of risk-relevant information**: Build consistent and evidence-informed understanding between service providers from different sectors on what is risk-relevant information that can be shared, supported by clear practice guidance.[581] For example, information on health, mental health, acquired brain injury and AOD use from the service sector can help understand risk and build a

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574 Ibid., p. 2.

575 Victorian Government, *Government Response: Legislative review of Parts 5A and 11 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)*, pp. 7–8.

576 Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 2; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 5; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

577 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 5; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

578 Sameera Fieldgrass, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 43; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 17.

579 National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, p. 3; Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 21.

580 Karen Todd, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34.

581 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 6; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 11; Kirsten Majidi, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 67; Lisa Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 19; Karen Todd, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35.

sophisticated intersectional understanding, but may not currently be shared if it is not deemed risk relevant.[582]

- **Improve broader workforce MARAM understanding**: Outside the family violence sector, build understanding of family violence under MARAM to support data capture in ways that can be shared easily.[583]

- **Promote more timely information sharing**:[584] This could include through clear protocols[585] and exploring ways to hold MARAM-aligned organisations accountable for information sharing and MARAM requirements, including timeliness and appropriate levels of information sharing[586] (see FVRIM finding, Section 2.4).

- **Improve FVISS response capacity**: Improve capacity of services and agencies to action information sharing requests promptly,[587] identify what information is risk relevant,[588] and ensure services have the systems, capabilities and capacity to facilitate real-time data use and sharing.[589]

- **Share analysis, not just data**: Support service providers and agencies to share the analysis of information about a person using family violence (for example, on patterns), rather than just the data.[590]

2.4.2   Promote proactive information sharing

While service providers can request information on people who use family violence under FVISS to assess and manage risk, this is underutilised because providers do not know where to request the information from. Instead, the service working with or holding data on a person using family violence could proactively share this information, though they may not know which service to share this with either.[591] Proactive information sharing was also a FVRIM finding and recommendation. See Section 2.4.

DFFH advised the FVISS Ministerial Guidelines outline proactive information sharing to support risk assessment and management should occur across all prescribed organisations, including TODs, Child Protection, Victoria Police, and specialist family violence services and perpetrator programs.[592] DFFH advised the Victorian Government is reviewing the FVISS Ministerial Guidelines and will consider how to

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582   Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14.

583   Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61.

584   National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, p. 3; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 17.

585   Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 6.

586   Ibid., p. 15; Darrylin Galanos, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 5.

587   Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 15.

588   Ibid.

589   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 17.

590   Bernadette McCartney, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 21.

591   FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 2; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 19; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 6.

592   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, response to written questions on notice, p. 3.

'strengthen content on proactive information sharing and other mechanisms to provide more guidance to promote proactive information sharing'.[593]

Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to improve proactive information sharing included:

- **Strengthen proactive sharing across the broader workforce**: Promote proactive information sharing by core, universal and mainstream services on patterns and people who use family violence.[594] This could include creating a central point for these services to send the information they obtain on people who use family violence and risk (which helps when services do not know where to proactively share information).[595] For the health sector, proactive information sharing is part of a cultural shift to see family violence as a health issue and that hospitals have an 'imperative' to share information.[596] The AOD sector in particular holds a lot of data on engagement or patterns that could be more actively shared with (or requested by) the family violence sector. This will improve as MARAM and FVISS are implemented over time.[597] Proactive sharing of MARAM risk assessments in all sectors should obtain client consent, where appropriate.[598]

- **Improve FVISS proactive sharing guidance**: Improve guidelines, processes and tools in FVISS about proactive sharing,[599] including through guidelines[600] and clear communication from the Victorian Government about whose responsibility it is to receive proactive information sharing reports[601] (for example, if a service collects data on a person using family violence, this could be shared to TODs).[602] Improved databases and information systems could enable proactive information sharing.[603] See Section 2.3.

- **Promote consistent internal agency policies for proactive sharing**: DFFH advised specialist family violence services, perpetrator programs and agencies (like Victoria Police, Child Protection) have their own procedures for proactive information sharing, which may prevent its full use under FVISS.[604] Agency policies should be aligned with MARAM and the FVISS guidelines on proactive information sharing.[605]

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593   Ibid.

594   Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 18; Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

595   Jac Dwyer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 53; Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 35–36; Karen Todd, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31.

596   Karen Todd, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30.

597   Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 32.

598   Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

599   Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 18; Karen Todd, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 17.

600   Darrylin Galanos, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

601   Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 19.

602   Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

603   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 19; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

604   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, response to written questions on notice, p. 3.

605   Tarryn Chapman, response to questions on notice, p. 1.

Implementing these measures could help increase the level of information that is proactively shared and address issues raised by Inquiry stakeholders about a reluctance to share information proactively and inconsistent proactive sharing practices.[606]

> **FINDING 39:** Increasing proactive and timely information sharing about people who use family violence consistently across agencies and service providers will improve visibility of perpetration patterns and behaviours, including against multiple victim survivors, and support dynamic risk management. The Victorian Government's current review of the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme Ministerial Guidelines is an opportunity to continue to improve this. Efforts to align internal agencies policies and increase capacity and understanding of risk-relevant information and where to proactively share information will help enhance the benefits of updates to the Ministerial Guidelines.

2.4.3 Improve information sharing and collaboration between The Orange Door Network and services

Information sharing and collaboration between TODs, and victim survivor and people using family violence service providers can be improved.[607]

Limitations of information sharing and collaboration between services

Inquiry stakeholders raised the following examples of areas that can be considered for improvement:

- **Access to detailed and timely TOD data**: TOD data is only accessible to the TOD Network and partner agencies, which often excludes people using family violence service providers.[608] These services rely on FVISS requests to individual agencies, often receiving partial or no data back from requests[609] (see Case Study 2.3) or delayed information.[610] TODs may complete inconsistent intake assessments for perpetrator programs.[611] TODs may share information to other services manually or by PDF—requiring manual input and creating risk of incorrect secondary data entry and delays in timely and efficient information sharing.[612]

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606 Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 6; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 18; Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, p. 5.

607 Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 4; Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 50; Joshua Lourensz, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 19.

608 Kirsten Majidi, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 67; Elaine Williams, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 32–33; Olsen Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

609 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 19; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30.

610 Kirsten Majidi, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 67.

611 The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 6.

612 Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, pp. 4–5; Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 43, 44.

- **Siloed services**: Specialist victim survivor and people using family violence service providers collect individual data, and do not always connect this to present a complete view (nor do the database systems the different services use connect).[613] It is hard for victim survivor services to obtain a full picture of a person using family violence's history, access to support/services (if at all), behavioural patterns, how (if at all) behaviour has changed and incident details—which is necessary to provide an informed response to victim survivors.[614] This information should be shared proactively with victim survivor services.[615]

- **Victim survivor contact details**: Information shared by TODs to people using family violence service providers will not include victim survivor contact details.[616] See Appendix B. This means people using family violence service providers may be working 'blind' and relying on information from the person using family violence or police reports.[617] People using family violence service providers cannot effectively evaluate outcomes if they are unaware of the person using family violence's behaviour outside of the program.[618] Currently there is no process to obtain consent from a victim survivor to share information with people using family violence service providers.[619]

- **Consistent access to case information**: People using family violence referrals from courts, Child Protection and Corrections Victoria to service providers do not include information about a victim survivor's MARAM assessments and case information related to the perpetrator because it is not mandated under current protocols. This means essential information from the victim survivor's perspective may not be available for case and risk management.[620] L17 reports from Victoria Police are referred to TODs, and TOD practitioners decide what (if any) data should be shared with relevant services.[621] Child and family services do not always receive the information they need under MARAM and CISS, due to inconsistent MARAM alignment or if consent to share information is not obtained.[622]

- **Court and people using family violence programs**: Reports from people using family violence service providers to courts about attendance and behaviour change may not be accurate because practitioners can only report on what they see in the sessions, without correlating this with information from the victim survivor.[623]

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613 McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, p. 10; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 20; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22.

614 McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, p. 10; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 20; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 3; Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, p. 5.

615 Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, p. 5.

616 Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30.

617 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22.

618 Ibid., p. 24.

619 Ibid., p. 22.

620 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 13.

621 Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 2; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, pp. 13–15; Lauren Callaway, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

622 Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 2.

623 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

- **Service providers and men's programs**: Client outcomes from MBCPs and other programs are not readily available after case closure.[624] Closure outcomes on service engagement are not centrally recorded or monitored,[625] and there is no onus on service providers to share information back to a past service provider that a person using family violence accessed, preventing longitudinal understanding of behaviour change.[626] Perpetrator programs can provide information on criminal justice stages, referral outcomes, compliance, satisfaction and demographic information to referring agencies.[627] See Part 3, *Learning what works: programs for people using family violence*.

- **Sexual violence and family violence sectors**: The family violence sector, and people using family violence service providers in particular, may not feel comfortable asking about sexual violence, even though it is a question in MARAM risk assessments. The sexual violence sector could work with people using family violence service providers to increase confidence and capability to record data on sexual violence that can be shared.[628] The sexual violence sector is not part of the TOD model and has been unable to consistently train TOD practitioners on sexual violence.[629]

DFFH advised TODs share relevant information in line with FVISS and CISS, and TOD practitioners complete information sharing training in induction and eLearns[630] with 'guidance to support appropriate and timely gathering and sharing of information'.[631]

FVRIM's 2023 report *Service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family* found service responses and programs for people who use family violence could be improved by addressing coordination challenges. Victim survivor and people using family violence service providers could coordinate better, including strengthening family safety contact work. Coordination between TODs and other elements of the family violence system could also be improved, including TODs and specialist family violence courts, and TODs' ability to offer consistent services to clients across different regions. FVRIM suggested to streamline the intake/assessment process at TODs 'to focus on referring perpetrators to the right services at the right time'.[632] This FVRIM report is discussed further in Part 3, *Learning what works: programs for people using family violence* and Appendix C. There is no Victorian Government response to this report, nor a requirement to provide one.

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624   Tarryn Chapman, response to questions on notice, p. 1.

625   Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 5.

626   Sameera Fieldgrass, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48; Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

627   Australian Association for Restorative Justice, *Submission 10*, p. 7.

628   Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 10.

629   Ibid. See Part 2, Section 2.1.2 on training.

630   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, response to written questions on notice, p. 3.

631   Ibid.

632   Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms—Service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family*, 2023, pp. 9, 30–31.

Case Study 2.3   No to Violence—People using family violence service providers' access to information

A specialist service provider for men who use family violence receives a referral containing information collected by the first point of contact agency (for example, Victoria Police, TODs or Child Protection). The referral only includes basic demographic data. Some data may be incorrect, for example, on gender, sexuality or the predominant aggressor (misidentification). Key pieces of information, like disability or accessibility needs, may be missing.

If the referral relates to a TOD client, CIP information is requested through a TOD. However, as the majority of clients for service providers for men who use family violence are not TOD clients, the service providers source additional information through FVISS requests to individual government agencies and client intake processes. Responses to FVISS requests may take weeks. Due to inconsistent understandings of what is risk relevant, some requested information may not be supplied or may be redacted.

The process of making multiple FVISS requests means intake processes begin without key information. This is risky as services attempt to build an understanding of the family violence occurring. Decisions about service suitability and risk assessments may be made before information requested under FVISS is supplied.

These challenges prevent the delivery of risk-informed, timely, safe and effective services and responses. Services are unable to understand a person using family violence's past engagement with services, or how level of risk has changed over time.

Much of the information the service provider then captures is qualitative and stored in case notes. It is challenging to extract and analyse this data.

Source: No to Violence, *Submission 61*, received 14 June 2024, pp. 7, 9, 11, 12.

Ideas to improve information sharing and collaboration between services

Proactive and greater information sharing, and more engagement and collaboration between separate family violence service providers, who support victim survivors or people who using family violence, would ensure risk assessment and case management is transparent and achieves better outcomes.[633] Risk-relevant information should be shared collaboratively between victim survivors and people using family violence service providers.[634] Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to improve information sharing and collaboration between services included:

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633   Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, p. 5; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 19.

634   Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 4.

- **Improve processes, protocols and training**: Implement consistent and transparent processes for TODs to proactively share information about people using family violence with victim survivor services.[635] Promote TOD's role in facilitating information sharing between victim survivor and people using family violence service providers.[636] Support opportunities for local organisations to train TODs about their programs.[637] Review information sharing protocols so that all people using family violence service providers can access relevant information and data to effectively support and manage risk.[638] Consider how to provide child and family services with more access to information under MARAM and CISS, for example, through the information provided by TODs with referrals.[639]

- **Implement victim survivor consent processes**: Implement processes on seeking victim survivor consent to share their contact details with people using family violence service providers for family safety advocacy practices (see Part 3, *Learning what works: programs for people using family violence*).[640]

- **Increase access to TOD data**: Expand access to TOD data, including its CRM, to additional agreed prescribed agencies, including people using family violence service providers.[641] See Part 4, Section 4.3.

- **Promote relationships and collaboration**: Support service providers to build relationships and strong partnerships with TODs, for example by co-locating services.[642] Increase communication and collaboration between different service providers to help reduce unnecessary and repetitive data collection.[643]

- **Use the sexual violence sector's expertise**: Support the sexual violence sector to train and build capacity and confidence to record and share sexual violence data in the family violence sector (including TODs and people using family violence service providers).[644] This would support implementation of Recommendation 13.

> **FINDING 40:** Proactive and greater information sharing, and more engagement and collaboration between the Magistrates' Court of Victoria, The Orange Door Network and people using family violence, sexual violence and victim survivor services would ensure risk assessment and case management is transparent and achieves better outcomes and understanding of people using family violence through collaborative practice.

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635 Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, p. 5.

636 Ibid.

637 Amy Cupper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39.

638 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 15.

639 Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 2.

640 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 5; Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 1.

641 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 6; Kirsten Majidi, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 67; Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 53; Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60; Elaine Williams, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29.

642 Vincent Silk, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 44.

643 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 3.

644 Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 10.

RECOMMENDATION 28: The Victorian Government explore options to implement an integrated and secure mechanism to facilitate more timely and proactive information sharing (including Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme requests and responses, and analysis of data on the profile of people using family violence) between service providers and agencies in the family violence sector to improve understanding of people who use family violence.

RECOMMENDATION 29: The Victorian Government progress and report publicly by June 2026 on actions taken in response to the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's *Legislative review of family violence information sharing and risk management* (2023) to promote timely and proactive information sharing. This includes in relation to the recommendations to:

- require Information Sharing Entities to respond to requests for information within a reasonable timeframe by amending Part 5A of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic)

- update content on proactive information sharing in the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme Ministerial Guidelines.

RECOMMENDATION 30: The Victorian Government develop protocols to promote information sharing about people who use family violence that:

- build consistent and evidence-informed understanding between different sectors on what is risk-relevant information that can be shared under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme

- communicate whose responsibility it is to receive proactive information sharing reports

- implement consistent and transparent processes to share information

- support collaborative practice and relationship building between The Orange Door (TOD) Network and other family violence services providers, including by promoting the role of TODs in facilitating information sharing, and providing guidance on sharing victim survivor contact details and case information (with consent, where appropriate).

Promote Risk Assessment and Management Panels' best practice collaboration and information sharing

RAMPs predate the Royal Commission into Family Violence[645] and collect and share data about the highest risk family violence cases. Information is gathered from Child Protection, Victoria Police, Corrections Victoria, mental health and AOD services,

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645 Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Report of the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor as at 1 November 2019*, 2020, pp. 24–25.

MBCPs, ACCOs (if appropriate), DFFH, TODs and other relevant services. Any relevant information about risk posed by the perpetrator from these services is presented to the RAMP.[646] RAMP meetings enable timely and effective risk management,[647] streamline approaches to information sharing[648] and bridge silos.[649]

RAMPs are successful because of cross-collaboration.[650] FVISS strengthened similar collaborative practice across the system, creating the expectation that 'relevant practitioners working a case are engaged in collective data gathering' on people who use family violence.[651]

Increasing access to the level of information and sharing processes available through RAMP, even a condensed version, 'would be of immense benefit to a wider cohort of family violence cases, not just those deemed to be highest risk'.[652] For example, RAMP meetings occur monthly and membership is limited to senior management, but increasing meeting frequency and including frontline practitioners would improve access to available and timely operational information.[653] A similar model in health and hospitals could support timely, accurate and secure risk assessment and information sharing.[654]

While RAMPs report data back to DFFH, it is unclear whether the statewide program data is analysed. The RAMP program could be evaluated and insights from data analysis shared to build understanding about its effectiveness, the profiles of people using family violence and any expansion opportunities.[655]

FINDING 41: Risk Assessment and Management Panels (RAMPs) are a best practice example of an extensive information sharing and collaborative practice that enables timely, streamlined and effective risk management and information sharing. A similar approach could be implemented across the family violence system, or access to RAMP data and information sharing processes expanded.

RECOMMENDATION 31: The Victorian Government review by June 2026 the Risk Assessment and Management Panels' (RAMPs') program and share insights from data analysis on its effectiveness, profiles of people using family violence managed by RAMPs, and opportunities to expand RAMPs' role to include assessment and management of lower risk family violence cases to improve understanding of people using family violence.

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646   Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 12.

647   Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 4.

648   Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

649   Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 4.

650   Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59.

651   Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 4.

652   MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 3; Fiona Bilucaglia, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

653   Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 5.

654   Renee Blight, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 13.

655   Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59.

2.4.4   Capture better data on recidivism

Improving the data captured about recidivism will help build a fuller picture of people who use family violence. Current recidivism data is flawed and does not necessarily indicate whether someone continues to use family violence.[656] This impacts the ability to use it to understand the volume of people using family violence.

Collecting more data on perpetrator recidivism and past criminal history will improve support provided to victim survivors through safety planning and risk management,[657] and provide information on the profile and volume of people who use family violence.[658] Contact with victim survivors can help measure recidivism accurately.[659]

A centralised way to capture data on recidivistic behaviours outside of justice and crime statistics or without criminal charges is needed.[660] This will help predict behaviour escalation in real time and contribute data to better understand risk profiles.[661] As current data on recidivism only indicates that a person using violence has come to the attention of the justice system again, there is a need to explore ways to capture data on unreported recidivistic behaviour in the home.[662]

Better long-term tracking of people who use family violence will help understand recidivism, perpetrator behaviour and the effectiveness of interventions.[663]

FINDING 42: Better capturing data on recidivism outside of the criminal justice system (including from victim survivors, as appropriate) will help build a better understanding of people who use family violence, the volume of perpetrators, recidivism (including against multiple victim survivors), perpetrator behaviour and the effectiveness of interventions.

RECOMMENDATION 32: The Victorian Government work to capture data on perpetrators' recidivism, including recidivistic behaviours that do not result in contact with the criminal justice system.

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656   Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 37.

657   Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 4.

658   Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, received 17 May 2024, p. 3.

659   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 8.

660   Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 5; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 5.

661   Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 5.

662   Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 37–38. See also Part 3, *Learning what works: programs for people using family violence*.

663   Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 6; Kirsten Majidi, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

2.5 Improve other sector databases and multi-sector collaboration

2.5.1 Alcohol and other drug, and mental health, sector databases

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Collection system (VADC) has limited functionality. VADC data cannot be easily retrieved and there are challenges to making the system work meaningfully to inform 'review and change'. The AOD sector's access to VADC data to evaluate services is limited, and they incur a cost for information to be retrieved to support things like 'statistical analysis of whether we are identifying family violence or people who use family violence at intake or a comprehensive assessment'.[664] As every AOD service provider uses a different CMS,[665] the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) recommended standardising CMS key metrics across the AOD sector or developing and implementing a single system.[666]

A 2022 Victorian Auditor-General's Office (VAGO) report found 'VADC data is not high quality or achieving its intended benefits'.[667] The report made four recommendations that were accepted by Department of Health (DH), including that it 'establishes a minimum set of functional requirements for a [VADC] compliant [CMS] and explores options to work directly with vendors to ensure they comply with these requirements'.[668]

A new mental health CMS is to be developed by DH that includes a statewide electronic mental health and wellbeing record.[669] It may replace VADC[670] and is expected to roll out to the AOD sector after implementation in the mental health sector.[671] DH's 2022–23 annual report notes that procurement had concluded 'with project governance in place'.[672] VAADA noted that it 'has been advocating that the new [mental health] CMS have robust data collection capabilities to record [domestic and family violence] prevalence and presentation' but that 'engagement [with DH] has been limited to date'.[673] There has been some delay in implementing the new CMS. DH notes work will '[c]ontinue developing and implementing key deliverables for the new information communication technology architecture for the mental health and wellbeing system', to occur from 2024–2027.[674] There is no other public information on the new mental health CMS, including whether it will replace VADC.

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664 Gillian Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 32; Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 32–33.

665 Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33.

666 Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, *Submission 22*, p. 9.

667 Victorian Auditor-General's Office, *Victoria's alcohol and other drug treatment data*, 6 October 2022, <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/report/victorias-alcohol-and-other-drug-treatment-data> accessed 29 November 2024, p. 2.

668 Ibid., p. 7.

669 Department of Health, *Annual report 2022–23*, 2023, pp. 29–30.

670 Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 38.

671 Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, *Submission 22*, p. 10.

672 Department of Health, *Annual report 2022–23*, p. 30.

673 Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, *Submission 22*, p. 10; Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 38.

674 Department of Health, *The next phase of reform: Mental Health and Wellbeing in Victoria*, Victorian Government, Melbourne, 2024, p. 48.

Involving the AOD sector in the mental health CMS development would help ensure it aligns with the AOD sector's needs and facilitates data integration.[675]

2.5.2 Health and hospital sector databases

Hospitals generally do not have efficient or universal ways to capture data on people who use family violence.[676] Hospitals have different data collection systems which do not speak to each other.[677] Data collection practices (including paper-based records) are not consistent or routine across all hospitals, or within each hospital.[678] If collected, data on people who use family violence is often held in patient file case notes.[679] Due to multiple databases and collection points with low functionality, data cannot be easily extracted.[680] Inquiry stakeholders from several family violence regional integration committees and the health sector note that some health services and hospitals have developed 'family violence data dashboards' or internal spreadsheets to analyse and extract regional data,[681] including on narratives and behaviours.[682] This data may not be shared with government databases due to confidentiality.[683]

A family violence flag, alert or code would help identify files holding relevant data and develop systems responses,[684] but hospitals lack clarity on whether they can legally capture data on the use of family violence or place a family violence flag on records.[685] Developing this capacity statewide would ensure data consistency and visibility as people move regions.[686] DH should provide clear direction about the legality and acceptability of flags, alerts or codes on hospital files to identify people who use family violence, and on terminology to allow clinicians to confidently record data on narratives and behaviours.[687]

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675 Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, *Submission 22*, p. 10.

676 Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence State-wide Leadership Team, *Submission 47*, p. 2.

677 Susan George, *Submission 55*, p. 4; Karen Todd, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30.

678 Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 2; Karen Todd, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30; Sharan Ermel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12.

679 The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 6; Susan George, *Submission 55*, p. 3.

680 Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 2; Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence State-wide Leadership Team, *Submission 47*, p. 2; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 6.

681 Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 2; Kirsten Majidi, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 64; Karen Todd, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30.

682 Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence State-wide Leadership Team, *Submission 47*, p. 2.

683 Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 2.

684 Susan George, *Submission 55*, p. 3; Karen Todd, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30; Renee Blight, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12; Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence State-wide Leadership Team, *Submission 47*, p. 3.

685 Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence State-wide Leadership Team, *Submission 47*, p. 3; Susan George, *Submission 55*, p. 3.

686 Karen Todd, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30.

687 Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence State-wide Leadership Team, *Submission 47*, pp. 3–4.

To improve the ways health services and hospitals capture data on people who use family violence, Inquiry stakeholders also suggested:

- Create and embed robust processes for hospitals to capture and share data on people who use family violence, and hospital or health-specific MARAM implementation support.[688]

- Create a de-identified statewide dataset for health services, built on consistent and required data fields about people who use family violence, accompanied by a specific user-friendly and secure system.[689] See Section 2.1.1.

- Create a centralised information or data repository,[690] or a people using family violence data collection and storage portal for hospitals.[691]

- When making changes to hospital databases or processes, consider the safety of victim survivors and the safe storage of data[692] and the need to not add to the data collection burden for staff.[693]

Improving hospital databases can help ensure the work of SHRFV Lead roles to improve MARAM alignment and identification of adults who use family violence will result in useful data collection.

2.5.3 Legal sector databases

The data collected by the 49 Community Legal Centres (CLCs) in Victoria is sometimes inconsistent and incomparable, impacted by vague data definitions. The breadth and complexity of services CLCs provide, combined with fragmented reporting obligations and use of different CMSs, exacerbates these issues.[694] Some CLCs' hard-copy files are not digitised[695] and data capture mechanisms may be too burdensome or use out-dated technology.[696] This significantly limits the ability for CLC data to be used effectively to improve understandings of people who use family violence.[697]

Investing in community legal sector data systems that are modern and fit-for-purpose would help improve data capture on people who use family violence.[698] The Federation of CLCs advised that with Victorian Government funding it 'has supported various Victora's Community Legal Centres to implement modern case management systems

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688   Ibid., p. 3; Renee Blight, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14.

689   Peninsula Health, *Submission 32*, p. 2; Sharan Ermel, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 12–13; Renee Blight, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 14–15.

690   Strengthening Hospital Responses to Family Violence State-wide Leadership Team, *Submission 47*, p. 2.

691   Susan George, *Submission 55*, p. 5.

692   Ibid., p. 4.

693   Sharan Ermel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12.

694   Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, received 14 June 2024, p. 10.

695   Patrick Cook, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9.

696   Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 10.

697   Ibid.

698   Ibid., p. 11.

and as a sector we are moving towards improvements'.[699] The Federation would like to build on this work to make data more useable and outcomes-focused. Further investment is needed in the community legal sector to help modernise all data systems, digitise files, ensure data quality, and link/integrate de-identified legal sector data to public datasets and the data from other sectors.[700]

FINDING 43: Improving the data collection systems of the alcohol and drug, mental health, health and hospital, and community legal sectors would help capture better data on people who use family violence, contributing to a fuller understanding of the profile, volume and service contact patterns of this cohort. This includes ways to:

- improve data on people using family violence in the Victorian Alcohol and Drug Collection system or the new mental health client system

- make it easier for hospitals to record, extract and analyse family violence data

- extend the implementation of modern case management systems to all 49 community legal centres in Victoria.

RECOMMENDATION 33: The Victorian Government work with service providers across the family violence, alcohol and other drugs, mental health, health and hospital, and community legal sectors to ensure that future database development and data collection protocols align with best practice family violence data collection standards.

2.5.4 Multi-sector collaboration and family violence information sharing

Bringing together services across different sectors like family violence, AOD, mental health, homelessness and gambling—which at times provide isolated support to individuals—can help meet the needs of people who use family violence to promote behaviour change and manage risk.[701] It can also help identify the co-occurrence of different forms of family violence, or of family violence and other related issues.[702] The Royal Commission into Family Violence identified that a greater focus on perpetration required collaboration between different agencies and experts, including family violence services, MBCPs, AOD and mental health practitioners and forensic psychologists.[703] Still, AOD, mental health and family violence services, including MBCPs, have had to work in silos.[704]

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699   Ibid.

700   Rachael Pliner, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9; Patrick Cook, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9; Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 10; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Data project*, <https://www.fclc.org.au/data_project> accessed 29 November 2024.

701   Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31; Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, response to questions on notice, p. 1; Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40; McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, p. 8.

702   Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40.

703   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 16.

704   Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

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For example, Meli's Men's Family Violence Intervention Centre demonstrates how co-locating people using family violence intervention services in one location can facilitate 'safe and timely transmission of risk relevant information'. By delivering 'a more coordinated approach' to intervention work, Meli allows people who use family violence to access multiple treatment options without accessing multiple service providers.[705] Receiving funding from DFFH, Meli is supported to deliver many interventions, including:

- Men's Family Violence Intake and Assessment at Barwon Orange Door

- Short, long and intensive case management for people who use violence

- MBCPs, modified MBCPs (for perpetrators with a cognitive impairment) and post-MBCP participation intervention

- Changing Ways (a trial initiative that seeks to engage high risk perpetrators who have poor or no history of treatment for their use of violence)

- Family Safety Contact team (advocates)

- Case management brokerage.[706]

Some inquiry stakeholders reported information sharing, collaboration, relationships and communication between different sectors can be formalised, fostered and improved to maintain and increase visibility over people who use family violence, and support victim survivors.[707] This includes between:

- ACCOs/ACCHOs, government agencies, services providers and TODs[708]

- human services (mental health, AOD, Child Protection, health), the legal sector, family violence services and men's intervention services (including MBCPs)[709]

- the AOD and family violence sector, which is inhibited when people who use substances (both victim survivors and people who use family violence) are turned away from family violence or mental health services for a variety of reasons, or if the family violence sector does not accept 'warm referrals'[710] (concerns about client referrals were also an issue reported by stakeholders to the 2023 FVRIM review)[711]

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705 Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 1.

706 Ibid, pp. 1–2. In addition to these DFFH funded services, Meli has developed several colocations within the Men's Family Violence Intervention Centre in the City of Greater Geelong, including community correctional services, mental health services, and therapeutic counselling.

707 Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 5; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 7.

708 Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 9.

709 Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31; Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16; The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, p. 4; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 10; ANROWS, 'Interventions for perpetrators of domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia', *ANROWS Insights*, vol. 2/2021, 2021.

710 Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27. 'Warm referrals' support the person to connect to services and 'can include phoning the service for the person, passing on information to the service with the person's consent and, in some cases, where people need more support, helping them to navigate the service system.' See Victorian Government, *Referrals to services*, 1 February 2020, <https://www.vic.gov.au/orange-door-service-model/referrals-services> accessed 20 December 2024.

711 Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Legislative review of family violence information sharing and risk management: reviewing the effectiveness of Parts 5A and 11 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)*, p. 94.

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- the criminal justice and mental health systems, for example, all people using family violence identified by Victoria Police could be referred for a mental health assessment, and GPs or psychiatrists could be informed if their patient has an FVIO to ensure suitable treatment.[712]

Minimising and addressing family violence and other harms is a collective responsibility, meaning different policies should intersect and align. The strategies and plans of different policy areas (for example, mental health) should align to the family violence framework,[713] and be data-driven.[714] Reform to the mental health sector following the 2021 Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System should consult AOD and family violence advisors and experts.[715] The upcoming development of a Victorian strategy to address drug harms should also align to the family violence framework.[716]

Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to foster collaboration and better family violence information sharing included:

- **Better understand partnerships required**: Analyse data to understand service need to target strategic partnerships within regions.[717]

- **Build networks**: Build on existing networks in regional communities (for example, regional mental health and wellbeing boards, SFVAs) to increase capacity and collaboration for health, family violence and AOD services to develop appropriate regional responses.[718] Consider creating a network or taskforce of GPs and psychiatrists to enhance collaboration with each other and the family violence sector.[719]

- **Improve AOD and family violence reform collaboration**: Prioritise ongoing collaboration and discussion with the AOD sector on family violence data collection reforms, as well as collaborative risk management.[720]

- **Improve cross-sector MARAM uptake**: Promote ongoing upskilling to apply MARAM across different sectors.[721] See Section 2.1.

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712 The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, p. 4.

713 Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31; Gillian Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31.

714 Associate Professor Andrew Carroll, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 44.

715 Gillian Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 31, 33.

716 Premier of Victoria, *Statewide action plan to save lives and reduce drug harm*, media release, 23 April 2024; Gillian Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31.

717 Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 4.

718 Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, response to questions on notice, p. 2.

719 Professor Manjula O'Connor, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

720 Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Gillian Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

721 Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

FINDING 44: Formalising and improving relationships between different sectors will promote better family violence information sharing, collaborative practice, and communication, and help identify the co-occurrence of different forms of family violence, or of family violence and other related issues. This will help present a more accurate picture of people who use family violence to inform risk assessment and management, and enable better reflection on what services promote positive behaviour change.

RECOMMENDATION 34: The Victorian Government enhance understanding of people using violence through collaboration and relationships between different sectors (both inside and outside of the public sector), including the alcohol and drug, mental health, health and hospital (such as GPs), legal and family violence sectors, to ensure a strategic and holistic approach to family violence (as well as other) data reforms. This should include creating a multi-sector taskforce to inform data reforms, analysing data to develop strategic partnerships and promoting information sharing and collaborative practice.

2.6 Collaborate and share family violence data beyond Victoria

2.6.1 State access to federal data

Australian Government and agency data

No single federal data source can provide a holistic understanding of family violence, but several include relevant information about people who use family violence.[722]

The Australian Government has recently made significant efforts to enhance family violence information sharing across systems and between jurisdictions. For example:

- In July 2021, the Intergovernmental Agreement on Data Sharing (IGA) between the Australian Government, states and territories commenced to share public sector data.[723]

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722 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Key information gaps and development activities: Key information gaps and development activities*, 17 September 2024, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/resources/key-information-gaps-and-development-activities> accessed 18 December 2024. For example, ABS produces the Person Level Integrated Data Asset. This longitudinal data asset collects information on health, education, taxation, etc, see Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Person Level Integrated Data Asset (PLIDA)*, n.d., <https://www.abs.gov.au/about/data-services/data-integration/integrated-data/person-level-integrated-data-asset-plida> accessed 18 December 2024. The asset may provide information about people accessing these services who may use or experience family violence, see Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 13; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 8.

723 National Cabinet, *Intergovernmental Agreement on data sharing between Commonwealth and State and Territory governments*, 9 July 2021, <https://federation.gov.au/about/agreements/intergovernmental-agreement-data-sharing> accessed 18 December 2024.

- In February 2024, the Data and Digital Ministers Meeting Outcomes Communique agreed their priorities for 2024. These included projects to 'improve data sharing and provide better services to victims of family and domestic violence'.[724]

- In May 2024, Premiers and Chief Ministers met and agreed that 'States and Territories will explore opportunities to strengthen national consistency and drive best practice approaches across jurisdictions, including relating to risk assessment and responses to sexual assault, led by Victoria and South Australia', and report back to National Cabinet late in 2024.[725]

- In September 2024, delivering on commitments made in May 2024, Premiers and Chief Ministers agreed to:

  - Develop new national best practice family and domestic violence risk assessment principles and a model best practice risk assessment framework.

  - Support enhancements to the National Criminal Intelligence System, which enables information sharing across jurisdictions, to provide a 'warning flag' that will assist police responding to high-risk perpetrators.

  - Extend and increase nationally-consistent, two-way information sharing between the family law courts and state and territory courts, child protection, policing and firearms agencies.

  - Strengthen system responses to high-risk perpetrators to prevent homicides, by trialling new focussed deterrence models and Domestic Violence Threat Assessment Centres. These centres will be able to use intelligence, monitor individuals and intervene with those at high risk of carrying out homicide.[726]

- In February 2025, the Data and Digital Ministers Meeting Outcomes Communique agreed their priorities for 2025. This included an ongoing commitment from all jurisdictions 'to improving information sharing to enable early intervention and stop violence escalating'.[727]

The Committee notes it can be difficult to ascertain the outcomes of these efforts.

Federal agencies are also committed to enhancing information sharing. For example, the ABS is developing a longitudinal national database—the Criminal Justice Data Asset—that, once operational, will provide the first national picture of how perpetrators of family violence engage with, and move within, the justice system.[728]

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724 Data and Digital Ministers Meeting, *Data and Digital Ministers Meeting Communique 23 February 2024*, media release, 23 February 2024. See also Australian Government, Department of Finance, *Intergovernmental agreement on data sharing fact sheet*; Australian Government, Department of Finance, *National Data Sharing Work Program factsheet*, December 2023.

725 National Cabinet, *Meeting of National Cabinet on gender-based violence*, media release, 1 May 2024; Data and Digital Ministers Meeting, *Data and Digital Ministers Meeting Communique 21 June 2024*, media release, 21 June 2024.

726 National Cabinet, *Meeting of National Cabinet*, media release, 6 September 2024.

727 Australian Department of Finance, *Data and Digital Ministers Meeting*, communiqué, <https://www.finance.gov.au/publications/data-and-digital-ministers-meeting-outcomes/7-february-2025> accessed 7 February 2025.

728 Ministers for the Department of Social Services, *New national criminal database will build evidence on violent perpetrator reoffenders*, media release, 20 June 2024; Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

These measures, and the CVDL's access to federal data for its de-identified linked data asset (which can be used for research, see Part 4, Section 4.1.5),[729] can help to build a fuller picture of people who use family violence and assist with related policy evaluation. However, increased access to, and linkage with, consistent and comparable federal data is needed[730] for research and analysis to advance understanding of people who use family violence[731] and how they access systems across jurisdictions.[732] It would also improve capability to monitor prevention efforts and inform understanding of drivers and reinforcing factors.[733] For example, for the CSA, increased access to federal datasets following the ABS's work to link national data infrastructure would help inform related policy and government decision-making;[734] and for researchers, increased access to federal datasets could improve understanding of temporary migrants' experiences of people who use family violence.[735]

It is important to share critical data about people using family violence between jurisdictions.[736] Inquiry stakeholders noted Services Australia, Medicare, Centrelink, NDIS service providers, the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission, the Australian Taxation Office and immigration data from the Australian Department of Home Affairs as sources of valuable data.[737] Increased access to this data, for example through an information sharing mechanism,[738] would increase the visibility of people who use family violence and improve risk management.[739] For example, access to income support payment data could help determine a person's location, and immigration data could help determine a person's risk of leaving the country.[740]

Efforts to enhance information sharing between the Victorian Government and the relevant federal data custodians about people using family violence could be improved by clear memoranda of understanding.[741] This could extend to Victorian Government-endorsed researchers and service providers,[742] including for CVDL and CSA.

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729 Victoria is the only jurisdiction with access to federal health data, for example, data from the Commonwealth Medicare Benefits Scheme and Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. See Dr Lance Emerson, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 2, 7.

730 Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, pp. 13, 14; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 6; Dr Lance Emerson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7.

731 The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 2.

732 Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 13; Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, p. 2.

733 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 10.

734 Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

735 Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, pp. 1–2.

736 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 10.

737 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 19; Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, *Submission 36*, p. 5; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 19; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 5.

738 Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, *Submission 36*, p. 5.

739 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14.

740 Kirsten Majidi, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 65, 66.

741 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 4.

742 Ibid.

> **FINDING 45:** Providing the Victorian Government with greater access to consistent and comparable federal data would help advance knowledge and understanding about people who use family violence, including to support the identification, assessment and management of family violence and inform more comprehensive research, analysis and evaluation to inform policy.

> **RECOMMENDATION 35:** The Victorian Government work to establish memoranda of understanding with the Australian Government and relevant federal data custodians to enable access to federal data and datasets relevant to people who use family violence in Victoria, including for the Centre for Victorian Data Linkage and Crime Statistics Agency, to enable de-identified data linkage, and for service providers to inform risk assessment and management.

Federal Circuit and Family Court data

State and territory courts have jurisdiction for family violence matters while the Federal Circuit and Family Court have jurisdiction for family law matters, which can involve family violence.[743] Family violence is a 'significant issue in the family law space'[744] and the divide between state and federal courts' jurisdictions can create barriers in accessing and sharing perpetrator data.[745] For example, 'a Magistrate's Court [in a state jurisdiction] may issue [a FVIO] against a perpetrator, while that same perpetrator is being granted access to children involved in the same family violence incident in the [federal] Family Court'.[746] The Committee finds this deeply concerning.

Efforts to improve family law information sharing include:

- In May 2024, the National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems commenced, enabling the federal Family Court and state and territory courts and agencies responsible for child protection, policing and firearms to share information.[747]

- In September 2024, the Australian Government agreed to increase two-way and nationally consistent information sharing between federal and state courts, child protection and policing agencies.[748]

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743 Parliament of Australia, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs, *A better family law system to support and protect those affected by family violence*, December 2017, pp. 22–25.

744 Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 1.

745 FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 3; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, pp. 10, 18.

746 FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 3.

747 The Framework is made operational by the *Family Law Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2023* (Cth). Australian Government, Attorney General's Department, *Family Law Amendment (Information Sharing) Act 2023: Factsheet for Professionals*, 3 May 2024, <https://www.ag.gov.au/families-and-marriage/publications/family-law-amendment-information-sharing-act-2023-factsheet-professionals> accessed 18 December 2024.

748 National Cabinet, *Meeting of National Cabinet*, media release, 6 September 2024.

- In October 2024, the Australian Attorney-General's Department presented its 2023–24 Annual Report. It noted significant reforms, including 'establishing an enhanced framework for sharing information relating to family violence, child abuse and neglect risk between the family law courts and state and territory police, child protection and firearms agencies'.[749]

MCV advised it provides interstate police with information to effect FVIOs for perpetrators living interstate and can provide copies of FVIOs to interstate legal services upon request. It can also obtain federal court data when compiling FVIOs.[750]

Increased state access and linkage to civil and criminal federal family law data[751] can help identify and assess risk, prevent family violence escalating and misidentification,[752] and contribute to a better understanding of systems abuse[753] and engagement with interventions.[754] It could include access to information collected from organisations providing family dispute resolution services.[755] A clearer communication pathway between federal and state courts could better inform court decisions and help the family violence sector advocate for victim survivors.[756] The National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems is an opportunity to 'support informed and appropriate decision making … where there is, or may be, a risk of family violence'.[757]

Increased access to family law data can also enable greater analysis and understanding of perpetration and people using family violence's systems involvement across jurisdictions.[758] For example, CSA wants to re-engage with the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia to have access to family law data to inform long-term analysis of family violence.[759] This would build on CSA's one-off analysis, the COVID-19 Family Violence Data Portal, which examined family violence trends from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2020.[760] See Part 4, Section 4.3.1 on increasing CSA's access to state-based datasets.

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749 Australian Attorney-General's Department, *Annual report 2023–24*, 2024, p. 4.

750 Magistrates' Court of Victoria, response to written questions on notice, p. 6.

751 Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 14; Dr Silke Meyer, Professor of Social Work, Griffith University, public hearing, Melbourne, 29 August 2024, *additional information*, p. 1.

752 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 10.

753 Rachael Pliner, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17; Joshua Lourensz, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 21.

754 Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information*, p. 1.

755 Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 14.

756 FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 3.

757 Meeting of Attorneys-General, *National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems*, n.d., <https://www.ag.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-05/national-strategic-framework-for-information-sharing-between-the-family-law-and-family-violence-and-child-protection-systems.PDF> accessed 18 December 2024, p. 2.

758 Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, pp. 13–14.

759 Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 5, 9.

760 Crime Statistics Agency, *COVID-19 Family Violence Data Portal*, 1 December 2021, <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/family-violence-data/covid-19-family-violence-data-portal> accessed 18 December 2024; Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 5, 9; Crime Statistics Agency, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 5 August 2024, p. 1.

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FINDING 46: It is deeply concerning that a Victorian Magistrates' Court may issue a Family Violence Intervention Order against a perpetrator, while that same perpetrator is being granted access to children involved in the same family violence incident in the federal Family Court. Rectifying this breakdown in information sharing should be a national priority.

FINDING 47: The National Strategic Framework for Information Sharing between the Family Law and Family Violence and Child Protection Systems is an opportunity to support informed and appropriate decision-making to better manage the risk of family violence. There is an opportunity to increase access to family law data across state and federal jurisdictions to inform research and analysis.

RECOMMENDATION 36: The Victorian Government strongly advocate at a federal level for the Crime Statistics Agency to have ongoing access to relevant family law data held by the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia to inform long-term analysis of family violence trends.

2.6.2 Formalise information sharing arrangements between states and territories

Information on family violence has to be shared between state and territory governments and agencies because family violence is not limited to one jurisdiction: people who use family violence are not bound by borders and nor should information about them be.[761] Sharing information on known perpetrators is critical for the safety of victim survivors who might reside in another jurisdiction.[762] Inquiry stakeholders identified cross-border information sharing as a particular issue,[763] for example:

- Information sharing can occur on an informal basis and relies on the development of professional relationships. This can be an unsustainable model due to personnel or funding changes.[764]

- Information sharing tends to operate more effectively in higher-risk cases, rather than in earlier stages. This can undermine efforts to prevent risk escalation and provide services before someone is at high risk.[765]

- Information sharing in cross-border and regional communities is essential as people may need to access services in another jurisdiction, for example, between Albury/

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761 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 10; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 3; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 3; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 17; National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, p. 2.

762 Cindy Cavanagh-Knez, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 32.

763 Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 17; Cindy Cavanagh-Knez, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 32.

764 Amy Cupper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35.

765 Fiona Bilucaglia, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33.

Wodonga or someone from New South Wales accessing a service in Mildura.[766] This can be problematic as information sharing practices can differ across jurisdictions and there is no electronic, integrated, inter-agency platform to facilitate information sharing.[767]

- Differences in legislation and policy can make data custodians reluctant to share information.[768] For example, Victoria and New South Wales apply different risk ratings for family violence.[769] See Section 2.6.3. This can make it difficult to assess what information can be shared.

Inquiry stakeholders suggested cross-border information sharing practices could be improved by assessing the legislative differences between jurisdictions to identify barriers,[770] and developing consistent and understandable guidelines.[771]

FINDING 48: Establishing sustainable and formalised family violence information sharing arrangements between Australian state and territory jurisdictions will improve Victoria's ability to address family violence risk and understand people who use family violence.

2.6.3 Align family violence definitions, risk ratings and data collection standards

Definitions of family violence differ across Australian jurisdictions, posing challenges for consistency in data sharing. For example, in Victoria, children hearing, witnessing, or otherwise being exposed to family violence is a distinct category of family violence, and behaviour can be classified as family violence even if it does not constitute a criminal offence, unlike in other states.[772] Definitions and practices to determine levels of risk and high-risk individuals also differ,[773] and different states include specific examples of family violence that Victoria does not include.[774]

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766   Cindy Cavanagh-Knez, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 32; Fiona Bilucaglia, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34.

767   STARvibe Technology, *Submission 72*, p. 4.

768   Amy Cupper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34.

769   Victoria has three risk ratings: at risk, elevated risk and serious risk. In NSW the two risk ratings are: at threat or serious threat. See Amy Cupper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34; Victorian Government, *Responsibility 3: Intermediate Risk Assessment*, 23 October 2023, <https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-and-resources/responsibility-3> accessed 18 December 2024; New South Wales Government, *Domestic Violence Safety Assessment Tool Guide*, June 2015.

770   Claire Waterman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23.

771   Amy Cupper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34.

772   See *Intervention Orders (Prevention of Abuse) Act 2009* (SA) s 8; *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) s 5(1)(b).

773   Lauren Callaway, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23.

774   *Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act 2012* (Qld) s 8; *Family Court Act 1997* (WA), s 9A; *Intervention Orders (Prevention of Abuse) Act 2009* (SA), s 8; *Family Violence Act 2004* (Tas) s 7. For example, Western Australia's definition includes stalking or cyber-stalking and repeated derogatory remarks against the family member (see *Restraining Orders Act 1997* (WA) s 5A(2)(c) — (d)). Tasmania's definition includes breaches of domestic violence orders as family violence, while Victoria's and other states do not (see *Family Violence Act 2004* (Tas) s 7(b)(iii)).

These different definitions and examples can limit the effectiveness of administrative data sharing, given that they result in different interpretations of what is family violence, and therefore differences in what is criminalised and can be shared.[775]

Variations in data collection standards between Australian jurisdictions can also make it difficult to analyse, measure and compare datasets.[776] For example, data collected by police, child protection and family violence services may use different standards.[777] Consistency in data collection is an important aspect to achieving reliable data and an accurate understanding of family violence on a national scale.[778]

FINDING 49: Aligning family violence definitions, risk ratings and data collection standards across Australia will create an opportunity for better data sharing across jurisdictions. This will provide a greater sample size and more consistent and comparable datasets, enhance informed decision-making, and improve Victoria's understanding of people who use family violence.

RECOMMENDATION 37: The Victorian Government advocate for and formalise cross-border family violence information sharing arrangements with other state and territory governments and the Australian Government, consider what legislative barriers may prevent this, and align family violence definitions, risk ratings and data collection standards.

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775 Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 4.

776 Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 66; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27.

777 ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 6.

778 Settlement Services International, *Submission 13*, p. 3; Amanda Alford, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14.

Part 3
What do we need to know more about

What the Committee heard

Part 3 | What do we need to know more about

We have done this huge amount of reform, so the next piece of that puzzle, having built on the incredible work around victim-survivors, is then focusing on how we work with people who use violence. I had heard so many times, working at Family Safety Victoria, 'If only we had better data around perpetration.' Particularly for people developing men's behaviour change programs but across the spectrum, including primary prevention, that data is a real gap, and it really limits our ability to effectively do this work.

Our Watch

" ... these are men 'we like, know and love'... is a terrifying reality. But it is also a strength in that we do know we need to find out more about people, we need to find out what works and what allows people to change, and we need to focus in on that, while keeping the voice and desires of victim-survivors central to this work.

Catholic Social Services Victoria

We know about substance use collectively, and we know that it does not discriminate on age, gender, race or community status. We also know that mental health issues, trauma, poverty, homelessness and a range of other comorbid factors can be both drivers and consequences of substance use. What we need to understand better collectively, and what we have begun to explore, is how and why the use of domestic and family violence follows similar patterns to those that I just described.

Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association

What I think is important to think about with data is to think about it along a life course. We actually have visibility of people who end up being perpetrators of family violence early on in the system. We can see that they are often victims of family violence in the child protective system. They become perpetrators of family violence when they are adults and start having contact with the justice system as adults. And then they very often end up in the drug and alcohol and mental health services as adults, and we consider them true perpetrators. That life course picture is available to us looking at publicly available datasets currently. It is really important to be able to look at that data, because family violence responses need to be varied depending on age and stage and depending on presenting co-morbid problems that a perpetrator might have.

Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee

When you are doing a MARAM risk assessment you do actually capture a lot more than demographics, so you do capture mental health history, drug use, AOD use, access to weapons, history of violence ... As provided by the victim-survivor, and even nitty-gritty like: how does he react around pets, is he violent towards animals, has he threatened children? We ask specific questions around sexual assault and we train our staff in how to do that in a way that will provide a response, because for an outright question you will get a 'No' usually.

Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre

We know that the cohorts that access service systems are not necessarily representative of all the people who are using family violence, so the service provision is the tip of the iceberg as to what we need to do. We know that the complexities, the overlapping intersectional—drug and alcohol, mental health—is not measured at all, but it is certainly something we see: men who have been in out-of-home care or some kind of service system as young people or adolescents experienced family violence in their childhood …

Berry Street

… collecting data on historical patterns and trends of perpetrator behaviour will help in achieving a fuller understanding of the cohort. This will enable more targeted and effective interventions to prevent and address family violence. If an intervention is correctly targeted, it can not only reduce social and economic costs to the community and government, but save a victim's life.

Additional and better targeted data collection could also assist in addressing overarching systemic patterns and trends that emerge amongst perpetrators, allowing the government to develop rehabilitation and education programs accordingly.

Law Institute of Victoria

Additional data that improves our visibility and understanding of the pathways into and out of the perpetration of family violence, as well as people's motivation or using family violence, will provide a greater insight into the underlying causes, risks of and protective factors against family violence, enabling more effective prevention and intervention strategies.

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand

I think that is the other key piece: people can use different forms of violence at different life stages. We know that young men might start perpetrating sexual violence when they are in their teenage years, and if they do, they are most likely to continue that violence over the longer term. Some stop and some escalate their violence. So it would help us understand those sorts of patterns of how things might change over the life course. And do people stop using at a certain time? Also, do some people just focus on family violence and they do not perpetrate sexual violence? Are some people perpetrating multiple forms of violence? It would help us then tailor those responses so that they are actually being meaningful and we are addressing the character and nature of violence and where it is perpetrated.

Our Watch

System responses working with young people need to adopt youth-centric approaches that incorporate understandings of children and young people's cognitive development and focus on rehabilitation, addressing trauma, family violence and other systemic issues. Understandings of young people who use family violence would be improved if data was given meaning through a more holistic understanding of young people's history and experiences … Young people who use family violence should be viewed through a different lens to adults who use violence.

Federation of Community Legal Centres

3

3

MacKillop cautions using the language of 'perpetrator' to describe the children and young people who are using violence in the home or in dating relationships. Our experience suggests that a very high proportion of the children and young people who are using violence are themselves victim/survivors of violence … Trauma based behaviour can manifest in violence and aggression. This is not to suggest that children and young people cannot be held accountable for their use of violence. Rather, it requires a therapeutic response that acknowledges their trauma and provides tailored support to change behaviour.

MacKillop Family Services

" … resources are needed to conduct meaningful evaluations and establish best practices regarding the effectiveness of [behaviour] change programs. Research should also investigate the understandings, attitudes, and [behaviours] of perpetrators across service systems, including men who do not encounter a service system at all. This constitutes a large proportion of the population of perpetrators of violence and skews the profile when not accounted for … a broader scope of research is needed to generate data and evidence on what works for the diversity of perpetrators of family violence. Current academic research disproportionately focuses on [MBCPs], which presents several issues for family violence data. The focus on MBCPs sidelines alternative interventions that might be more effective for the diverse range of people who use violence, particularly within LGBTIQ+ communities.

Thorne Harbour Health

The inadequate use of elder abuse perpetrator data has led to perpetrator intervention frameworks and programs in Victoria being primarily focused on domestic and gendered family violence, aligned with the typical perpetrator profiles of these forms of violence. To ensure more effective interventions, it is crucial to develop new frameworks and programs tailored to the specific profiles of elder abuse perpetrators.

Council on the Ageing Victoria and Senior Rights Victoria

… data sharing would also hopefully reduce the burden on older people to tell their stories again and again. Too often these data are collected at crisis point, after abuse has occurred. Data is gathered from older victims, not perpetrators, at a time of heightened stress, and the reliability of the data is neither fully corroborated nor complete. Instead, if data from multiple sources could be collated, we could map what is collected, we could reduce repetition and we could strategically add more questions that elaborate on the risk factors for elder abuse and perpetrators' social and clinical characteristics.

National Ageing Research Institute

Outcome measurements are critical to broadening understanding of what 'success' looks like for services working with people using violence to better recognise the complexity of behaviour change journeys. Intervention services aim to shift deeply embedded values and behaviours, which often means that men using violence require lengthy engagement with a range of services. In this way, outcome measurements are best placed to capture data on how intervention services support men's behaviour change journeys, moving beyond unrealistic and oversimplistic expectations that men using violence will be 'fixed' by attending a single, time-limited program.

No to Violence

… I also believe that what we do not have currently in Australia and internationally is a sufficient evidence base for understanding domestic, family and sexual violence desistance processes per se. This requires longitudinal datasets but also broader research projects exploring these phenomena for various cohorts and communities. It is time to move from a strict deficit focus in terms of who starts, who persists, who escalates, to actually look at who does not perpetrate abuse within the context of a high-risk cohort—so those people who are exposed to risk factors we know are associated with domestic and family violence—but also who stops perpetrating abuse across the life course.

Dr Hayley Boxall, Research Fellow, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences

Rigorous program and systemic evaluation of perpetrator interventions requires sustained investment to inform the evidence base. In parallel, additional research and pilot program design is required to discover new insights on desistance from FV, from reduction to cessation of perpetrator patterns of behaviour, to continue to expand evidence and interventions across the continuum.

Safe and Equal

3

Part 3 | What do we need to know more about

Knowing more about people who use family violence—including hidden cohorts who may not be flagged within existing systems and complex cohorts for whom standard interventions might not be effective—'will enable more nuanced responses and effective interventions to interrupt' trajectories of family violence,[1] and provide valuable insight into the characteristics, patterns and volume of people who use family violence.

The Victorian Government's Family Violence Research Agenda 2021–2024, FSV's Research Program 2021–2024 and federally, the Australian National Research Agenda to End Violence Against Women and Children 2023–2028, include research priorities that align with areas identified by Inquiry stakeholders as topics to know more about. See Appendix C. The evidence presented to this Inquiry suggests more work is needed to build understanding and evidence in relation to people who use family violence.

3.1 Demographic, intersectional, context and life course data

Increasing family violence data on demographics, intersectional factors and the context of perpetration can help:

- identify cohorts who require tailored or additional interventions and support[2]

- build a more nuanced understanding of what leads to family violence perpetration[3]

- recognise trends and patterns of behaviour to form a fuller understanding[4]

- deepen understanding of effective preventions and interventions,[5] including for people beginning to use or at risk of using family violence[6]

- build evidence on what protective factors divert people from offending[7]

- inform practice insight and policy development for the family violence sector, government and researchers.[8]

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1   Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, received 5 June 2024, p. 10.

2   Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, received 30 May 2024, p. 3; Meli, *Submission 7*, received 27 May 2024, p. 4.

3   National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, received 31 May 2024, p. 8; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, received 14 June 2024, p. 9.

4   Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 10.

5   National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 8; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 10.

6   Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3.

7   Ibid.

8   Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 4.

To avoid risks associated with building perpetrator profiles and typologies, caution must be applied when using demographic, intersectional, context and life course data.[9] While trajectories place people at greater risk of using family violence (for example, adverse childhood experiences, including exposure to trauma during early adolescence),[10] there is no one type of person or profile of people who use family violence.[11] See Part 1, Section 1.2. These types of data should be collected to manage risk and provide informed services, be collected at volume[12] to form macro-level understandings, and contribute to research and policy.[13]

The Victorian Government explains intersectionality as 'the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation'.[14] For example, where a person's social characteristics (such as gender, sexual orientation and ethnicity) combine with attitudes, systems and structures in society and organisations (such as prejudice, homophobia and stigma) it can make it harder for them to get the help they need.[15]

Inquiry stakeholders identified more data can be collected on characteristics[16] and intersectionality for people who use family violence, including:

- demographic information like country of origin, cultural or linguistic background, ethnic identity, migration status or religion,[17] gender, sex, sexuality,[18] disability,[19] age,[20] LGBTIQA+ status, First Nations status[21]

- socio-economic indicators like income, wealth, employment status, education levels, geographic location[22]

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9   Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, received 31 May 2024, p. 11; Dr Nicola Helps, Senior Project Officer, ANROWS, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33.

10   YSAS, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 19 August 2024, p. 1.

11   Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, Chairperson, Respect Victoria Board, Respect Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36; Respect Victoria, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 10 September 2024, p. 2.

12   Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 6.

13   FVREE, *Submission 37*, received 31 May 2024, pp. 2, 3.

14   Victorian Government, *Understanding intersectionality*, 8 February 2021, <https://www.vic.gov.au/understanding-intersectionality> accessed 2 January 2025.

15   Ibid.

16   ANROWS, *Submission 15*, received 30 May 2024, pp. 5, 6; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, received 30 May 2024, p. 5; FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 2; Mitchell Shire Council, *Submission 66*, received 24 June 2024, p. 6.

17   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 15; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 9; Mitchell Shire Council, *Submission 66*, p. 6.

18   Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, received 31 May 2024, p. 4; Mitchell Shire Council, *Submission 66*, p. 6; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 9.

19   National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 8; Mitchell Shire Council, *Submission 66*, p. 6.

20   Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 9.

21   Ibid.

22   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 15; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 8; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, received 31 May 2024, pp. 3, 5; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 11; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 9; Vincent Silk, Team Leader, Family Violence Services, Thorne Harbour Health, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 45.

- co-occurrence of family violence and health/social factors like AOD use,[23] mental health,[24] post-traumatic stress disorder,[25] homelessness and housing,[26] gambling,[27] financial situation,[28] emotional-behavioural cognition/cognitive impairment,[29] acquired brain injury,[30] non-diagnosis,[31] family/caring responsibilities[32] and social isolation.[33]

Understanding how a person's experience, perpetration and behaviour interconnects with intersectional factors can help inform prevention and early intervention initiatives.[34] For example, collecting data on service interactions and breaches of FVIOs '[t]hat tells us a bit of a story' about what is likely to happen in a family violence situation, and better understand the context behind breaches, like the impact of acquired brain injury: 'drilling down and disaggregating and saying, "Who is breaching and what are we going to do that stops that happening?" [can help] potentially getting in earlier before we need to impose an intervention order at all'.[35]

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23 Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, received 28 May 2024, p. 3; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, received 30 May 2024, p. 14; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 11; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, received 31 May 2024, p. 5; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 9; Mitchell Shire Council, *Submission 66*, p. 6; Meg Bagnall, Lead AOD and Family Violence, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 27, 31; Gillian Clark, AOD Strategy and Reform Manager, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31.

24 Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, p. 3; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 8; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 5; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 9; Mitchell Shire Council, *Submission 66*, p. 6; Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 27, 31; Gillian Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31; Elena Campbell, Associate Director, Research, Advocacy and Policy, Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7; Associate Professor Andrew Carroll, Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, Fellow of RANZCP, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 43; Professor Manjula O'Connor, Consultant Psychiatrist, Chair RANZCP Family Violence Psychiatry Network, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 44.

25 Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, p. 3.

26 Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 5; Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31; Gillian Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31.

27 Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 9; Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31; Gillian Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31.

28 Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 11.

29 Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, p. 3; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, received 14 June 2024, p. 17.

30 Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, p. 3; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 17; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4.

31 Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, p. 3.

32 Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 6.

33 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 8; YSAS, response to questions on notice, p. 4.

34 Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7; Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31; Gillian Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31.

35 Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4.

Inquiry stakeholders suggested more data can be collected on the context of family violence perpetration, including:

- behaviour,[36] patterns of behaviour,[37] types of violence used,[38] nature of offending,[39] frequency and severity,[40] recidivism,[41] offending history[42]

- attitudes and beliefs,[43] and the impacts of attitudes (on a range of issues, including gender, masculinity, equality) and values on perpetration[44]

- what influences the actions of people who use family violence and their relationships with others,[45] including the role of family/situating people in the context of family (this can also help understand how to support families)[46]

- protective factors that 'keep young men and boys from using family violence, because not everyone goes on to use family violence',[47] who does not use family violence despite being considered a high-risk cohort,[48] how relationships, environments or workplaces, as well as potential interventions or different life courses, make people less likely to use family violence, or cease if they do[49]

- early indication risk factors associated with greater likelihood or severity of family violence, including coercive control, systems abuse,[50] witnessing family violence at a young age, attitudes and substance use[51]

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36 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 7; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 4; Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

37 ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 6; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 14; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, received 31 May 2024, p. 22; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 6; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 4; STARvibe Technology, *Submission 72*, received 18 September 2024, p. 3.

38 Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, pp. 10–11; Matt Tyler, Executive Director, Community and Systems Impact, Jesuit Social Services, pubic hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 11.

39 Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 11.

40 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 14; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3; Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, received 19 July 2024, p. 9; Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 11.

41 Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, received 17 May 2024, p. 3; Djirra, *Submission 8*, received 27 May 2024, p. 4; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 5; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, received 14 June 2024, p. 7; Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 9.

42 Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 8.

43 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 22; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 4; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 11; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 9.

44 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, pp. 6, 7.

45 Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, received 14 June 2024, p. 3; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 11; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 6.

46 Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, received 14 June 2024, p. 1; Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, received 29 May 2024, p. 1.

47 Phillip Ripper, Chief Executive Officer, No to Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52.

48 Dr Hayley Boxall, Research Fellow, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24. MARAM-aligned evidence based high-risk indicators include: stalking; controlling, jealous and/or obsessive behaviours; and/or drug and/or alcohol misuse/abuse. Victorian Government, *Evidence-based risk factors and the MARAM risk assessment tools*, 21 July 2021, <https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-foundation-knowledge-guide/evidence-based-risk-factors-and-maram-risk> accessed 3 May 2024.

49 Ebony King, Senior Policy Advisor, Our Watch, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24; Phillip Ripper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52; Dr Hayley Boxall, *Transcript of evidence*,.p. 24.

50 McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, received 31 May 2024, p. 7.

51 Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 8.

- how people not engaged with the service system perpetrate family violence, and how to prevent, identify, intervene and stop its use[52]

- the community and cultural contexts of family violence in First Nations communities, including data on 'cultural identity, language proficiency, connection to community, and experiences of colonisation'[53]

- for elder abuse, demographic and context information like cognitive capacity, mental health, substance use, carer status, living arrangements, nuances of financial relationships, past history of family violence, criminal justice involvement, as well as outcomes and changes in perpetration, relationships and behaviours[54] (and what works to respond to elder abuse, see Section 3.4).

- perpetration of violence in a range of settings, including in institutional settings,[55] and outside of family contexts[56]

- how shame and stigma impact/drive the use of family violence and mental illness and how people seek help for both/either mental illness or use of family violence,[57] and how this affects use of family violence in different communities[58]

- how mental illnesses like anxiety and depression manifest for men and interrelate with family violence (this will help identify opportunities for early intervention or to address root causes of behaviour).[59]

Inquiry stakeholders also identified a need to know more about the life course, pathways and trajectories of people who use family violence, including:

- the impacts of pre-existing trauma,[60] cycles of abusive behaviour,[61] intergenerational trauma,[62] adverse childhood experiences[63] on perpetration, and how adverse childhood experiences affect children's development and lives (for example, employment, substance use, mental health, family violence)[64]

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52 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 18; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 13; Dr Hayley Boxall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23.

53 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 15.

54 National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, received 30 May 2024, p. 6; Bianca Brijnath, Director Social Gerontology, National Ageing Research Institute, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Ben Rogers, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Council on the Ageing Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29; Avital Kamil, Principal Lawyer, Seniors Rights Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29.

55 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 15.

56 Ibid., p. 12; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 9.

57 Dr Jacqueline Rakov, Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 45, 49.

58 Professor Manjula O'Connor, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 48–49.

59 Dr Jacqueline Rakov, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 45; Associate Professor Andrew Carroll, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

60 Australian Association for Restorative Justice, *Submission 10*, received 28 May 2024, p. 7; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 17; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 9; Mitchell Shire Council, *Submission 66*, p. 6; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7; Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17.

61 Australian Association for Restorative Justice, *Submission 10*, p. 7.

62 Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, p. 3.

63 Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 11; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 17; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 9.

64 Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, p. 3; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, received 23 June 2024, p. 38; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7.

- pathways into family violence/things that lead to use of family violence,[65] offending and lethal actions,[66] trajectories of family violence,[67] how use of family violence changes at different periods in a person's life (for example, depending on the life stage or relationship),[68] and the dynamics of family violence[69]

- when people use family violence,[70] what triggers/motivates/escalates use of family violence,[71] the predictors and nuances of precipitating events,[72] drivers,[73] why people use family violence[74] and the intent behind perpetration[75]

- pathways out of using family violence,[76] why people cease using family violence[77] and the predictors of desistance,[78] what programs they have been involved in,[79] how to shift behaviour,[80] how many people who use family violence want to address their violence and how they would like to access help[81]

- what works and allows people to change,[82] what sustains/enables positive behaviour change,[83] and what are the barriers to behaviour change.[84]

Continuing to build the data and information that is collected about the context and life course of people who use family violence can help to build a better understanding of people who use family violence and help to inform policy to create safer environments for victim survivors and their families.

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65   No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 4; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, received 16 August 2024, p. 22; Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17; Phillip Ripper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 47; Dr Silke Meyer, Professor of Social Work, Griffith University, public hearing, Melbourne, 29 August 2024, *additional information,* p. 5.

66   ANROWS, *Submission 15*, pp. 5, 6; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 7; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 7; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 7; Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, received 12 September 2024, p. 3.

67   Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 7; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 7; Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17.

68   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 14; Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, p. 3; Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17; Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information,* p. 5.

69   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 4.

70   Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23.

71   ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 5; National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, received 30 May 2024, p. 3; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 3; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 22; Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 11.

72   ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 5.

73   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 4; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, received 31 May 2024, p. 11.

74   Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Elaine Williams, Principal Strategic Advisor, Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

75   Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3.

76   No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 4; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 22; Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, p. 3; Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Phillip Ripper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 47.

77   Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17.

78   Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3; Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 9.

79   Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 11.

80   Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 3.

81   Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 11.

82   Joshua Lourensz, Executive Director, Catholic Social Services Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 13.

83   Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, p. 6; National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, p. 3; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 5; Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information,* p. 5.

84   Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 3.

3.2 Systems, programs and services

Inquiry stakeholders note that the family violence system is complex—from referrals, system entry points, co-occurring service delivery,[85] how it integrates with core, mainstream and universal services,[86] and the relationship between prevention and early intervention, service provision, programs and policy.[87]

Increasing the data and information collected on prevention, early intervention and service provision, and using it better, can help to improve understanding about people using family violence. Inquiry stakeholders suggested data and information could be collected on prevention and early intervention, including:

- immediate and long-term impacts and/or effectiveness of prevention, early intervention and response initiatives for people who use family violence,[88] including for initiatives focused on addressing underlying drivers of violence such as 'racism and intergenerational trauma',[89] and how they can be adapted[90]

- outcomes of prevention and education initiatives on understandings of family violence, including education in schools or other social settings[91]

- if prevention initiatives for health issues like AOD use also prevent family violence.[92]

Inquiry stakeholders suggested data and information could be collected on service provision, including:

- how people using family violence access and use services, including service use patterns and demand or the nature and extent of engagement,[93] how service use changes,[94] referral pathways,[95] ways to better measure increasingly complex service provision and case management (including MBCPs)[96]

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85   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, received 31 May 2024, pp. 2, 3.

86   Ibid., p. 3.

87   Ibid., pp. 2, 3.

88   Ibid., p. 1; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 7; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 8; Elaine Williams, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

89   Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 12.

90   Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 7.

91   Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, p. 3; National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, p. 2.

92   Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3.

93   Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 3; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 5; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 2; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 7; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 3.

94   Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 4; Kristy Berryman, Manager Family Violence, Meli, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 19.

95   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 3; Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, received 26 July 2024, p. 5.

96   Australian Association for Restorative Justice, *Submission 10*, p. 3; Bernadette McCartney, Executive Director, Services, Meli, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Ella Mackay, Manager Family Safety and Child Wellbeing, Cafs Ballarat, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31.

- how rural and regional areas approach service provision and subsequent challenges, including how victim survivors and people who use family violence access services and support in rural and regional areas[97] to better understand family violence trends and service delivery improvements[98]

- how to effectively engage people in the system, or why they may not engage,[99] and what the barriers are to providing a service[100]

- who is not accessing services and supports (through an intersectional lens),[101] community need for different programs and services, at different points in time[102]

- impacts, effectiveness and experiences of services and the family violence system on victim survivors and people who use family violence, including experiences of effective and timely accountability processes and supports[103]

- how much people who use family violence understand about FVIOs and the consequences of breaches[104] (which could indicate whether more education is required to ensure compliance, or if interactions with the legal system can be improved to prevent breaches and further harm)[105]

- effectiveness of risk assessment tools and processes[106] and safety planning[107]

- effectiveness of recidivism reduction strategies[108]

- effectiveness of psychiatric treatments of mental illness for people who use family violence to reduce offending, and the relationship between complex mental illness and family violence, including coercive control.[109]

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97 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 13; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 8; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 7; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 10.

98 Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 10.

99 Tania Farha, Chief Executive Officer, Safe and Equal, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 56.

100 The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 3.

101 Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 6.

102 inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 18.

103 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 4; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, pp. 2–3.

104 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 22; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7.

105 Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, p. 4; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7.

106 National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, p. 3; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 3.

107 The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 3.

108 National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, p. 3.

109 The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, received 12 June 2024, pp. 2, 4–5; Associate Professor Andrew Carroll, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 43–44.

3.3 Prevalence, gendered drivers, reinforcing factors and co-occurrence

Inquiry stakeholders identified a need to better understand the impact of gendered drivers, including how:

- the reinforcing factors[110] of family violence manifest and interact with or impact the gendered drivers of family violence[111]

- attitudes about these drivers, including gender stereotypes, influence use of violence and other violent behaviours[112]

- drivers of family violence intersect with the needs of diverse cohorts.[113]

Collecting better data related to these will help develop targeted and effective prevention and intervention initiatives,[114] and draw 'stronger correlations between perpetration of gendered violence and other forms of violence'. It will also help track 'patterns of perpetration, as opposed to one-off experiences of violence' and help explain 'how multiple systems of oppression and discrimination, power and privilege shape the social context in which violence against women occurs'.[115]

It is also important to build knowledge of how systems of power, privilege and discrimination affect the prevalence and use of family violence, including using data to improve understanding of how racism, sexism, ableism, ageism, classism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of discrimination affect people who use family violence, and how these link with the drivers of violence and patterns of perpetration.[116] Better risk reduction, prevention and intervention strategies, including for marginalised cohorts of people who use family violence, can be built through a greater understanding of the intersections and influences of reinforcing factors, gendered drivers, discrimination, intersectionality, diverse and complex experiences, needs, and social identities of people who use family violence.[117] For example 'internalised homophobia can act as a risk factor for intimate partner violence in queer relationships, and disrupting this link will be critical to driving down rates of violence in LGBTIQA+ relationships'.[118]

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110 The reinforcing factors of family violence include alcohol and other drugs, gambling, financial stress, mental illness and pornography. Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 12.

111 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 5; Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 12; Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23. The gendered drivers of family violence are: condoning of violence in general; experience of, and exposure to, violence; factors that weaken prosocial behaviour; and resistance and backlash to prevention and gender equality efforts. See Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 15.

112 Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, pp. 9, 12.

113 Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, received 14 June 2024, p. 9.

114 Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36. See Case Study 3.1 for an example of a family violence service provider using data to tailor an intervention program for young men.

115 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 14. See also Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 9.

116 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, pp. 7, 5; Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 14.

117 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, pp. 7, 5, 14; Mitchell Shire Council, *Submission 66*, p. 6; Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 14.

118 Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 14.

Inquiry stakeholders identified many other topics that require further research and data to build a fuller picture of family violence and people who use family violence, including:

- prevalence of perpetration,[119] how prevalence varies across populations and regions[120] (this can help understand progress towards population-level prevention goals/monitoring frameworks[121] and where efforts should be focused[122]), what increases or reduces rates of prevalence[123]

- prevalence, impact, detail, risk and appropriate response for police-perpetrated family violence (this is under-reported and under-researched)[124]

- prevalence, dynamics and impacts for family violence in diverse communities, and people who use family violence against people from diverse backgrounds[125]

- prevalence, instances and corrective actions for misidentification of victim survivors as people who use family violence[126] (see Part 2, *Prioritise rectification processes to correct misidentification*)

- protective[127] and risk factors[128] at the community and society levels[129]

- how use of family violence changes across populations and over time,[130] and how trajectories, life spans, attitudes and other factors vary in different regions[131]

- people who use family and sexual violence who are not in contact with services or the justice system and their outcomes,[132] what practices people use to keep themselves out of view of the system[133]

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119 ANROWS, *Submission 15*, pp. 4–5; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, pp. 4, 8; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 10; Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 11.

120 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 5; Mika Pediaditis, Research and Evaluation Advisor, Women's Health Grampians, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 40–41.

121 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 8; Mika Pediaditis, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 40–41.

122 Mika Pediaditis, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 40–41.

123 Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 11.

124 Flat Out and Police Accountability Project, *Submission 38*, received 31 May 2024, p. 1; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 36; ANROWS, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria, response to written questions on notice received 9 October 2024, pp. 2–3.

125 Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, pp. 7–8.

126 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, pp. 2–3; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 5.

127 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 6; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3; Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

128 Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3; McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, p. 7.

129 Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3.

130 Livia La Rocca, General Manager Intergrated Place-Based Services, Vic East and NSW, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 62; Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 11.

131 Mika Pediaditis, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 41.

132 MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 4; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 6; Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 42.

133 Rebecca Buys, Head of Policy and Research, No to Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52.

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- impacts of family violence,[134] including on individuals (for example, fear, injury, physical, emotional, financial, psychological), services (for example, cost of interventions) and communities (for example, housing, crime, education)[135]

- impacts of family violence on children,[136] the nature of family violence involving children/where children are present,[137] the co-occurrence of violence against children and young people (for example, intimate partner violence and child maltreatment occurring in the same household) which is a particular risk for girls[138] (see Section 3.5)

- outcomes for the whole household or family[139]

- family violence experienced or used by LGBTIQA+ people,[140] how prevention and responses apply to transgender, nonbinary or gender fluid identities,[141] the impact of violence in LGBTIQA+ communities, including family of origin violence, and experiences of homelessness due to rejection and family violence.[142]

Inquiry stakeholders also identified a need to better understand co-occurring and interlinked forms of family violence and other issues, including:

- the relationship between family violence and other violent offending[143]

- the co-occurrence of different types of family violence (for example, sexual violence, aggression, harm to pets, coercive control, child abuse)[144]

- the frequency, severity and dynamics of violence against women in male-dominated contexts like workplaces, online gaming and pornography[145]

- coercive control and controlling behaviours[146] (requiring better long-term and non-physical data),[147] what forms of family violence are more incident-based compared to behaviour over a sustained period of time[148]

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134   Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3; FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 3; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 1.

135   FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 3; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3.

136   Name withheld, *Submission 1*, received 9 April 2024, p. 1; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 3.

137   Name withheld, *Submission 1*, p. 1.

138   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, pp. 13–14.

139   McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, p. 10.

140   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 15; Bisexual Alliance Victoria, *Submission 11*, received 28 May 2024, p. 2; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 1; Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, received 31 May 2024, p. 5; Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 3.

141   Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, pp. 3–4.

142   Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, pp. 5–6; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 36.

143   Name withheld, *Submission 1*, p. 1.

144   Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17. See also Claire Waterman, Director Strategy, Policy and Reform Division, Family Violence Command, Victoria Police, public hearing, Melbourne, 9 September 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 3; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 13.

145   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 13.

146   Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3; Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Livia La Rocca, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 62.

147   Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 4.

148   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 14.

- impacts of systems abuse and its relationship to other kinds of family violence[149]

- people who use family violence against multiple victim survivors[150]

- why and how family violence and substance use follow similar patterns and the intersections,[151] and substance use coercion.[152]

Improving MARAM data capture on coercive control and long-term patterns will also help understand people who use family violence.[153] For example, improving the collection of information about non-physical violent behaviour (such as emotional abuse) over the long term. See Part 2, Sections 2.1.1, 2.2.4 and 2.3.2. This could also include collecting more information on coercive control from the community and professionals, including non-criminal justice bodies like banks, GPs, emergency departments and schools.[154]

Part 4 considers different ways to grow and use the evidence base about people who use family violence to address the above priority areas identified by Inquiry stakeholders.

FINDING 50: To achieve a full understanding of people who use family violence, the evidence base needs to be strengthened. This includes improving the data and information that is collected on:

- the demographics, intersectionality, contexts and life courses of people who use family violence

- how family violence systems, programs and services work and interact

- the prevalence and impacts of family violence

- the manifestation and impacts of gendered drivers and reinforcing factors of family violence

- co-occurring and interlinked forms of family violence and other issues.

3.3.1   Sexual violence is a form of family violence

'Sexual violence against adults and children is a common, though often overlooked or under-addressed, component of family violence perpetration'.[155] According to Sexual Assault Services Victoria (SASVic) 'sexual violence is even more under-reported

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149   Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, p. 4; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, received 31 May 2024, p. 13; Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 4. See Part 2, Section 2.3.2 about systems abuse.

150   Name withheld, *Submission 1*, p. 1; McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, p. 7.

151   Gillian Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26.

152   Dom Ennis, Acting Chief Executive Officer, YSAS, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

153   Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, pp. 4, 6.

154   MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 3.

155   Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, received 31 May 2024, p. 1 The Committee acknowledges that sexual violence also occurs separately to experiences of family violence.

than family violence'.[156] This means the extent of it is likely underestimated in current Victorian data.[157] Some barriers to reporting or collecting data on sexual violence (including through MARAM risk assessments) are stigma and fear, communication barriers, social isolation or low understanding of sexual violence, particularly for women from diverse backgrounds.[158]

Finding a better way to capture data on the co-occurrence of sexual violence with family or domestic violence (as well as how it occurs separately) will help build a more thorough and nuanced understanding of the profile and volume of people using family violence.[159] Inquiry stakeholders identified sexual violence data and research gaps including:

- data on sexual violence that does not result in criminal justice engagement[160]

- outcomes for people who use sexual violence, including children and young people who use harmful sexual behaviours[161]

- attitudes and beliefs of people who use sexual violence, including why people use sexual violence[162]

- how the attitudes of those around people who use sexual violence shape behaviour and a sense of accountability (including bystander attitudes)[163]

- how the attitudes of people working in the systems that people who use sexual and family violence engage with (MBCPs, police, courts) influence responses[164]

- how family violence services record data on and action sexual violence reports[165]

- sexual violence experienced or used by LGBTIQA+ people in the context of family violence, and how prevention and responses apply to transgender, nonbinary or gender fluid identities[166]

- family and sexual violence experienced by people in the sex industry, including the co-occurrence of family violence and other forms of violence against women and gender diverse people in the sex industry (such as workplace violence, or from individuals that may be known to them, for example former clients), and whether

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156 Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 4.

157 Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, pp. 3–4.

158 Ibid., p. 3.

159 Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 3.

160 Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 4; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 36; Kathleen Maltzahn, Chief Executive Officer, Sexual Assault Services Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 1.

161 Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 1.

162 Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 4.

163 Ibid.

164 Ibid.

165 Ibid., p. 6.

166 Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, pp. 3–4; Vincent Silk, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46. See also Thorne Harbour Health, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 23 August 2024, p. 3.

men issued with an FVIO in the context of a relationship continue to use the services of sex workers (and thus increase risk for those workers)[167]

- what interventions work to address sexual violence[168] (see *Learning what works: programs for people using family violence* below).

Opportunities to strengthen data collection on sexual violence include:

- invest in evaluations and research that measures the impact of sexual violence interventions and strengthen interventions over time,[169] and collect data on the efficacy of MBCPs to address sexual violence[170] (see *Learning what works: programs for people using family violence* below)

- resource sexual violence services to collect qualitative and quantitative data and conduct research and evaluate programs to provide insight into emerging forms of sexual violence (such as image-based sexual abuse and generative artificial intelligence), pathways into the use of sexual violence (for example, pornography use, non-fatal strangulation) and effective and efficient responses[171]

- conduct more regular studies on forms of family violence like sexual aggression and how this intersects with other behaviours or health issues[172]

- include sexual violence in future perpetration studies[173] (see Part 4, Section 4.1.4)

- map the existing data on sexual violence across the service system to understand what data is needed (see Part 1, Recommendation 1), and what needs to be included in a national survey[174] (see Part 4, *Population-based survey*)

- collect more behavioural and attitudinal data from adults, children and young people who use family and sexual violence, as well as those around them[175]

- collect data on sexual violence for those experiencing additional barriers, such as First Nations and migrant and refugee communities, and people with disability[176]

- support initiatives to increase sexual violence reporting rates,[177] and ensure services can respond and provide support when people seek help[178]

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167 Project Respect, *Submission 24*, received 30 May 2024, p. 4; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 36.

168 Dr Amy Webster, Policy, Advocacy and Research Manager, Sexual Assault Services Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*.

169 Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 3.

170 Ibid., p. 5.

171 Ibid., pp. 7, 8.

172 Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3.

173 Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 4.

174 Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 42.

175 Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 3.

176 Ibid., p. 5.

177 Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

178 Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9.

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- consider the three Multi-Disciplinary Centres[179] in Victoria that co-locate family violence and sexual assault services to further understand co-occurrence, different service touchpoints and trajectories[180]—these are considered best practice models[181] but have no specific database, meaning less data is captured compared to the TOD CRM.[182]

There is a notable amount of research on sexual and family violence, however, this largely relies on evidence collected from victim survivors, not adults or children and young people using sexual violence.[183] Current sexual violence and family violence databases do not have the functionality to adequately understand co-occurring violence and trends—enhancing database sophistication would enable more trend analysis.[184]

Existing data on sexual and family violence[185] can be better used to drive change, provide better services and generate new insight. This includes through improving databases to extract MARAM data on sexual violence (see Part 2, Section 2.3) and empowering sexual violence service providers to own, link and analyse their own data[186] (see Part 4, Section 4.3), as well as sharing more social service data (see Part 2, Section 2.5 and Part 4, Section 4.3.1). Analysis and integration of existing datasets (see Part 2, Sections 2.3 and 2.5, and Part 4, Section 4.1.5), that could include supporting sexual violence providers to link their datasets with the eSafety Commissioner or Commission for Children and Young People, would also help to build a better picture of available services.[187]

The Victorian Government committed 'to develop the whole of Government 10-year strategy to address sexual violence and harm' in August 2022.[188] SASVic noted 'progress has stalled' and there are 'limited opportunities to raise the issue of sexual violence perpetration data separate to [family violence] reforms processes'.[189]

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179   Multi-Disciplinary Centres bring together different agencies in one building, including Victoria Police, Child Protection, sexual assault counsellors and advocates and family violence services, 'to provide a victim-centred, integrated and holistic response to victim survivors of sexual assault, child abuse and, in some locations, family violence'. See Victoria Police, *Options Guide For Victim Survivors: Reporting in person at multidisciplinary centres*, 16 December 2024, <https://www.police.vic.gov.au/options-guide-victim-survivors-victoria-police-perpetrated-family-violence-or-sexual-offences/reporting-in-person-at-mdcs> accessed 6 January 2025.

180   The Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 27 August 2024, p. 1; Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 38–39. Statewide operational guidance between TODs and sexual assault support services (including those delivered in Multi-Disciplinary Centres) 'provides guidance to practitioners on how to deliver coordinated services', see Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria, response to written questions on notice received 4 October 2024, p. 4.

181   Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 38–39.

182   The Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre, response to questions on notice, p. 1.

183   Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, pp. 2–3.

184   Lauren Famulari, Manager, Evidence and Strategic Advocacy, The Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 53.

185   For information about existing Victorian and national data on sexual and family violence see Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, pp. 2–3.

186   Ibid., pp. 3, 6, 7, 8.

187   Ibid., p. 5.

188   Premier of Victoria, *Strong laws to protect Victorians from sexual violence*, media release, 4 August 2022.

189   Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 1.

Progressing this strategy, along with the next rolling action plan[190] presents an opportunity to strategically build the evidence base through research and studies about sexual violence, including sexual violence involving technology, in turn, improving responses to these types of violence.

> **FINDING 51:** Sexual violence is a form of family violence. Existing data on sexual and family violence can be better used to drive change, improve services and generate new insight to build understanding about people using sexual and family violence. This can be achieved by improving the functionality of databases to extract data on sexual violence, integrating and analysing existing relevant datasets, sharing more social service data and empowering sexual violence service providers to own, link and analyse their own data.

> **RECOMMENDATION 38:** The Victorian Government, in consultation with the sexual violence services sector, implement a whole of government approach to better understand the co-occurrence of sexual violence with family or domestic violence. This should include the development of a strategy to improve data capture on people who use sexual and family violence, and including sexual violence in a minimum dataset trial.

3.3.2   Technology-facilitated abuse

Technology-facilitated abuse occurs across both family and sexual violence and can include online sexual harassment, surveillance and financial abuse.[191] The scope of data collected about these forms of abuse, and any new and emerging forms of family and sexual violence driven by changes in technology, needs to continuously evolve.[192] This includes coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse and reproductive coercion.[193] Better data collection is needed on new, emerging and changing settings for sexual and family violence like social media, digital methods and the internet, including technology-facilitated abuse (for example, tracking) and its drivers.[194] Family violence data sources need to expand to recognise changes in technology and how these may be used to help facilitate abuse.[195]

Strong Foundations notes people using family violence increasingly use technology as part of their violence,[196] with laws and frontline services not always keeping pace with these changes, making policing and responding difficult. Improvement areas include

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190   *Strong Foundations* sets out five priorities that will inform the 'concrete actions' (and timeframes and responsibilities) for the next rolling action plan. Actions to implement rolling action plans are reported against the *Ending family violence: annual reports*. Victorian Government, *Ending family violence: annual reports*, 29 December 2023, <https://www.vic.gov.au/ending-family-violence-annual-reports> accessed 8 April 2024. See Part 1, *Victoria's approach to ending family violence* (Figure).

191   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Strong Foundations*, p. 44.

192   Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, p. 5.

193   Ibid.

194   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 13; Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 54; Victorian Government, *Evidence-based risk factors and the MARAM risk assessment tools.*

195   Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, p. 5; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 16.

196   This includes surveillance, coercion, recording sexual violence, abusive messages, online sexual harassment and using technology to perpetrate other forms of harm, such as financial abuse or humiliation.

increasing knowledge on how to prevent people from being monitored or harmed through technology-facilitated abuse and improving identification and response to people's use of technology.[197] *Strong Foundations* also notes a dedicated sexual violence strategy is being developed to 'coordinate and improve' responses 'to all forms of sexual violence'.[198]

FINDING 52: The Victorian Government's *Strong Foundations* includes family and sexual violence involving technology as an improvement area. This presents an opportunity to strategically build the evidence base about sexual violence and technology-facilitated abuse through database enhancements, increased data sharing and research. Learnings from this work can be applied in developing a whole of government approach to better understand the co-occurrence of sexual violence with family or domestic violence.

3.3.3 Risk assessment data on sexual violence and technology-facilitated abuse

Inquiry stakeholders suggested more questions on sexual violence be included in MARAM tools—MARAM only captures data on sexual assault in the context of intimate partner violence, which is not extensive enough and does not capture data for other relationships, for example, between a parent and child.[199] Service providers can be supported to have conversations about sexual violence for information to be recorded and included as part of datasets.[200] Questions about sexual violence could be asked later in the risk assessment process when trust and rapport has been built with clients.[201] Improving understanding of how sexual violence data is collected and flows through MARAM, L17s, FVIOs and courts would increase visibility over data pathways.[202]

Stakeholders identified updating L17s to include or improve recording of sexual violence[203] and technology-facilitated abuse[204] as a key way to improve data collection on these new and emerging forms of violence. Victoria Police noted that as the L17 form is an actuarial tool (providing a risk score), 'a significant dataset' that 'accurately predicts the weighting of the risk rating numbers' would be required before any changes are made.[205] The L17 form is also aligned to MARAM.[206]

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197 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Strong Foundations*, p. 44.

198 Ibid., p. 10.

199 Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 7.

200 Dr Hayley Boxall, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 28–29.

201 Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, p. 3.

202 Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 8–9, 12; Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 10.

203 Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 11.

204 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 10; Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12.

205 Lauren Callaway, Assistant Commissioner, Family Violence Command, Victoria Police, public hearing, Melbourne, 9 September 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 21. See the Victoria Police transcript for further discussion on elevating risk and risk ratings.

206 Ibid., p. 15.

MARAM places technology-facilitated abuse in the category of stalking, as a serious risk factor that may indicate an increased risk of the victim survivor being killed or almost killed.[207] Stalking, including monitoring of technology, is also noted as a form of coercive control.[208] However, this does not account for the full range of technology-facilitated abuse, particularly sexual violence and young people's use of harmful sexual behaviours, such as deepfakes.[209] Over 99% of Australians who have experienced family violence also experience technology-facilitated abuse,[210] and these forms of family and sexual violence are growing.[211] However, MARAM risk assessment questions 'do not pick up things like tech-facilitated sexual abuse and deepfakes'[212] and L17s do not list technology-facilitated abuse as a type of family violence.[213] MARAM and L17s could be updated to appropriately identify these forms of violence.

> **FINDING 53:** To increase data capture on sexual violence and technology-facilitated abuse in a family violence context, a better understanding of how this data is currently collected (and shared) through the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework, L17s, Family Violence Intervention Orders and courts is needed.

> **RECOMMENDATION 39:** Given the rise of technology-facilitated abuse, the Victorian Government review by June 2026 how sexual violence and technology-facilitated abuse are covered in the Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework, and consider whether amendments are required to ensure the range and complexity of these forms of violence are being captured to achieve a fuller understanding of people using family violence. It is important that the Victorian Government work with Victoria Police and courts to share learnings from this review.

3.3.4   Affirmative consent

Affirmative consent reforms came into effect under the *Justice Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Act 2022* (Vic) on 30 July 2023. The reforms place responsibility on each person participating in a sexual act to take steps to check that the other person consents, rather than assuming consent has been given.[214] The law arose from a Victorian Law Reform Commission (VLRC) review that recommended the Victorian Government introduce legislation requiring affirmative consent and report

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207   Family Safety Victoria, *MARAM practice guides foundation knowledge guide: Guidance for professionals working with child or adult victim survivors, and adults using family violence*, 2021, pp. 27, 30.

208   Ibid., p. 119.

209   Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4.

210   Respect Victoria, *Red flags: What is tech abuse and what should you look out for?*, 31 May 2024, <https://www.respectvictoria.vic.gov.au/news/red-flags-what-tech-abuse-and-what-should-you-look-out> accessed 6 January 2025.

211   Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4.

212   Ibid., p. 12.

213   No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 10.

214   Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Victorian affirmative consent laws*, n.d., <https://www.sasvic.org.au/consent> accessed 18 December 2024.

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annually on the progress of the reforms' implementation and consider establishing a monitoring function.[215] VLRC identified extending the role and term of the FVRIM as one monitoring option. See Part 1, Section 1.3.

The Victorian Government committed to review the operation of the affirmative consent reforms after the new provisions are applied in practice.[216] However, there is no review process in the legislation,[217] nor public information on when a review will take place. A review of the new reforms could help track their implementation and obtain data on effectiveness.[218] This includes Victoria Police attitudes and processes in relation to sexual violence, as well as any unintended consequences such as systems abuse by people using family violence against victim survivors.[219] Data on the reforms could help build understanding of the nuance and complexity of family violence,[220] and the relationship between sexual violence and family violence (for example, if it is used as a form of systems abuse).[221]

> **FINDING 54:** A review of the *Justice Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Act 2022* (Vic) in relation to affirmative consent could help to understand the impacts of the affirmative consent reforms and the relationship between sexual and family violence.

> **RECOMMENDATION 40:** The Victorian Government undertake a regular review of the *Justice Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Act 2022* (Vic). The first review should occur at the earliest opportunity and consider the impacts of the affirmative consent reforms, and the relationship between sexual and family violence.

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215 Victorian Law Reform Commission, *Improving the Justice System Response to Sexual Offences*, September 2021, p. 503.

216 The Hon. Sonya Kilkenny, 'Justice Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Bill 2022: Second reading', delivered at 4 August 2022.

217 *Justice Legislation Amendment (Sexual Offences and Other Matters) Act 2022* (Vic).

218 Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 6.

219 Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2.

220 Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, p. 5.

221 Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 6.

3.4 Elder abuse is a form of family violence

Elder abuse is a form of family violence, where the person using family violence is a family member (often adult children), or a close, trusted person.[222] The nature and drivers of elder abuse, who perpetrates it, and the experiences and desired outcomes of victim survivors are sometimes different to other forms of family violence.[223] Data on these are not captured well through current mechanisms (like TOD, MARAM and FVISS). These focus on gendered intimate partner violence and there is inadequate data on the incidence and perpetration of elder abuse.[224]

Counselling and mediation services for elder abuse are available at select TODs. DFFH provide an Elder Abuse Learning Hub for professionals working with older people.[225] TOD practitioners learn about elder abuse during induction and can access a MARAM elder abuse eLearn.[226] However, evidence to this Inquiry demonstrates that these initiatives do not adequately support the early identification and collection of data on elder abuse. Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria advised that 'only 6 of 36 [TOD] sites have staff specialised in elder abuse'.[227]

Underreporting of elder abuse is widespread, leading to an incomplete understanding of people who use elder abuse and family violence.[228] Further data collection is required, including about risk factors for elder abuse,[229] intersectionality with other social and clinical characteristics,[230] long-term outcomes on how relationships, circumstances and behaviours change, [231] and the nature, early indicators and responses to financial elder abuse.[232]

Service providers require the skills and confidence to identify and ask questions about elder abuse.[233] Data on incidents of elder abuse are not always collected

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222 Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, received 7 June 2024, p. 5; Victoria Police, *Elder abuse*, 28 January 2025, <https://www.police.vic.gov.au/elder-abuse> accessed 4 March 2025.

223 For more detail on the differences, see Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, pp. 4–7; Ben Rogers, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

224 Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 4; Ben Rogers, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Avital Kamil, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23.

225 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Elder abuse*, 26 September 2023, <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/elder-abuse> accessed 20 September 2024.

226 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, response to written questions on notice, p. 5.

227 Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 11.

228 Underreporting can occur if older people do not know they are experiencing elder abuse or where to report, or if they are worried about negative repercussions for family or are dependent on that family member for support. See ibid., pp. 4, 9; State Trustees, *Submission 54*, received 13 June 2024, p. 1; Ben Rogers, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 21; Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivor Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 2.

229 For example, information about the person using violence's cognitive impairment status, carer or enduring power of attorney status, living arrangements, past history of family violence, previous involvement with the criminal or justice system, and level of community engagement with services. See National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, p. 6.

230 For example, older people who are LGBTIQA+, from culturally and linguistically diverse or First Nations backgrounds, live in aged care, and/or have cognitive impairment are particularly vulnerable to elder abuse. See ibid.

231 Ibid.

232 State Trustees, *Submission 54*, p. 4.

233 National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, p. 3.

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consistently.[234] The reasons for this are complex and include increased demand on service providers that is not matched with funding.[235] Private bodies also have a role in identifying and responding to elder abuse. [236] See Part 2, Section 2.2.3.

Community organisations providing family violence services are not always equipped to identify, document and respond to elder abuse,[237] nor are mainstream and universal services routinely interacting with older people.[238] This means ISEs prescribed under FVISS may not be best placed to identify elder abuse.[239] Victim survivors of elder abuse do not tend to seek help from family violence services, meaning FVISS has minimal application to assist support services working with people experiencing elder abuse.[240]

There is scope to expand the FVDCF as it relates to elder abuse and to improve training for the identification of elder abuse.[241] See Part 2, Section 2.1 (for example, identification through financial counsellors). This includes training and appropriate resources for identifying and responding to elder abuse in multicultural communities.[242] Better database integration, data sharing and research analytics on elder abuse can also help build understanding.[243] See Part 2, Section 2.2.1 and Section 2.3 and Part 4, Section 4.3.

MARAM processes are not always well suited to capture data on the unique indicators and relationship dynamics of elder abuse.[244] Implementing protocols and procedures that establish standardised reporting would better integrate elder abuse into existing family violence systems.[245] Expanding MARAM to include elder abuse risk factors, like financial situation or cognitive ability, would support better reporting and data collection.[246]

Data on the use and indicators of elder abuse can be better collected and used to understand what works to prevent and respond to elder abuse, including long-term outcomes.[247] With limited interventions currently available for elder abuse, tailoring, trialling and evaluating interventions[248] against articulated outcomes is important to

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234 Ibid.

235 Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 14.

236 Ben Rogers, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 27–28.

237 Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 4.

238 For example, aged care, hospitals and health professionals. See ibid., pp. 10, 13.

239 Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 13 September 2024, p. 1.

240 Ben Rogers, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 22–23; Avital Kamil, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 22–23.

241 Ben Rogers, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 21, 25.

242 Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 25–26; Avital Kamil, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26.

243 Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22.

244 Ben Rogers, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22.

245 Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 13.

246 Avital Kamil, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23.

247 Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, pp. 12, 14; National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, p. 6.

248 Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 4; Ben Rogers, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29.

guide this work. Exploring behaviour change programs for people who use elder abuse adapted to diversity and profiles for elder abuse would also be beneficial.[249] The FVOF does not include specific outcomes on elder abuse.[250]

FINDING 55: Improved reporting, identification, data collection and analysis on elder abuse and people who perpetrate elder abuse can build a more accurate understanding of the nature of elder abuse, the characteristics and motivations for perpetration, and how to prevent and respond to incidents of elder abuse.

RECOMMENDATION 41: The Victorian Government:

- develop a Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework tool specifically for elder abuse

- enhance the capacity of workers across the service system (such as at The Orange Doors, financial counselling services and in health and aged care) to better identify and collect data on elder abuse, including financial and emotional abuse, risk factors, intersectionality and long-term outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION 42: The Victorian Government develop specific outcomes in relation to elder abuse in the Family Violence Outcomes Framework, including under *Domain 3: Perpetrators are held accountable, connected and take responsibility for stopping their violence* and *Domain 4: Preventing and responding to family violence is systemic and enduring*.

3.5   Children and young people

The nature and drivers of youth family violence and power dynamics can be different to other forms of family violence.[251] For example, in relationships such as child to parent or between siblings (See Background, *Note on language and terminology*). It can include adolescents using violence in the home,[252] youth intimate partner violence[253] and substance use coercion.[254] While data collection on children and young

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249   Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, pp. 12, 14.

250   Victorian Government, *Family violence outcomes framework*, 27 March 2023, <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-outcomes-framework> accessed 8 April 2024.

251   Berry Street, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 23 August 2024, p. 2; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, received 31 May 2024, p. 4. For more detail on the differences, see YSAS, *Submission 9*, received 28 May 2024, pp. 7–8.

252   Adolescent violence in the home includes young people using violence against parents or siblings. Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, pp. 18–19.

253   YSAS, *Submission 9*, p. 7.

254   Ibid., p. 10.

people's use of family violence has improved, it is complex and challenging to know the best way to capture this data and link it to adult systems to increase understanding.[255]

Current data on children and young people's use of family violence may be skewed, including towards those with greater contact with the justice or crisis intervention systems[256] (which can be due to 'over-policing' of certain cohorts[257]). Underreporting is a key issue, with some cohorts of children and young people facing additional barriers to reporting family violence and some cohorts facing a higher risk of experiencing violence.[258]

Focusing on data collection for children and young people from multicultural or First Nations backgrounds carries the risk of over-criminalising, over-policing, greater child protection involvement, and increasing trauma on children and young people.[259] This is why Victoria's Aboriginal holistic healing framework for family violence, *Nargneit Birrang,* outlines that 'holistic healing' should seek 'to address underlying trauma and its impacts by taking a strengths-based, trauma-informed and whole of life approach to safety, wellbeing and empowerment'.[260] See Part 1, *Prioritise Indigenous Data Sovereignty*.

Community education for young people on family violence is important to address underreporting.[261] See Part 2, Section 2.2.4. Some barriers to collecting data on children and young people are similar to those for adults, for example, IRIS and outcomes measurements.[262] See Background. Misidentification is also a key issue for young people.[263] See Part 2, *Prioritise rectification processes to correct misidentification*.

3.5.1 Using data for policy, early intervention and tailored responses

Data relating to children and young people who use violence, that can be used to guide policy development and investment in age-appropriate interventions, is limited. Better capturing data on children and young people's experiences and use of family violence can help inform their support needs. Data can help guide service planning and

255 Fiona Dowsley, Chief Statistician, Crime Statistics Agency, public hearing, Melbourne, 22 July 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 10.

256 Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 3; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, pp. 14–15; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 15.

257 Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 15.

258 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, pp. 14, 19; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 8.

259 Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, pp. 2–3; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 15.

260 *Nargneit Birrang* provides a framework to guide the flexible design, funding, implementation and evaluation of Aboriginal-lead holistic healing programs for family violence in Victoria Family Safety Victoria, *The Nargneit Birrang framework: To see the river*, 2019, pp. 2, 9.

261 Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, pp. 8–9.

262 Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 7–8.

263 Bianca Johnston, Family Violence Specialist, YSAS, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30; Elia Pourasgheri, Director, Family, Youth and Children's Law, Victoria Legal Aid, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4; Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivor Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 2.

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staff training needs, develop tailored programs, inform early intervention initiatives and prevent future risk of using violence.[264] Inquiry stakeholders identified that contextualising data on children and young people's use of family violence involves:

- **Applying an age and developmental lens**: Age and adolescent development requires complex and unique support, care and intervention needs and tailored responses.[265] The transitionary stage from ages 10 to 25 presents opportunities for critical intervention and trajectory change for young people's use of family violence.[266]

- **Recognising experiences**: It is highly likely children and young people who use family violence have experienced family violence themselves[267] and other forms of polyvictimisation.[268] Adverse experiences in a young person's life affects mental health and can manifest as increased likelihood of alcohol dependence, experiences of post-traumatic stress disorder, major depressive disorders, and anxiety disorders in adulthood.[269] Children and young people's behaviours may have developed to cope or survive past family violence experiences.[270]

- **Recognising intersectionality**: Cognitive development, trauma, neurodevelopmental disorders or developmental issues, disability, mental illness or substance use issues impact children and young people and use of family violence.[271] Key drivers for children and young people experiencing family violence, including sexuality, religion, racial discrimination and disability, also need to be considered alongside the gendered drivers of family violence.[272]

- **Recognising capacity for change**: Prioritise early intervention and holistic support, with a focus on desistance, resilience and the potential for young people to change,[273] along with working closely with the whole family where appropriate.[274]

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264 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14; Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 3; MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 4; Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information*, p. 8; Tom Bowerman, Acting Executive Director, Services, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 49–50; Kristy Berryman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Lisa Robinson, Director, Family Safety and Therapeutic Serivces, Meli, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25.

265 Bianca Johnston, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29; YSAS, *Submission 9*, pp. 8–9; Darrylin Galanos, Acting Manager, Client Analytics and Reporting, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

266 Bianca Johnston, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 29, 34.

267 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 25; Victoria Legal Aid, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 26 August 2024, p. 2; Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information*, p. 8; Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2.

268 Polyvictimisation is when someone experiences 'multiple victimi[s]ations of different kinds, such as sexual abuse, physical abuse, bullying, and exposure to family violence', see Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Multi-type maltreatment and polyvictimisation*, December 2023, <https://aifs.gov.au/research/family-matters/no-93/multi-type-maltreatment-and-polyvictimisation> accessed 26 September 2024.

269 Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 1.

270 YSAS, *Submission 9*, p. 9.

271 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 26; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 15; YSAS, *Submission 9*, p. 9; Victoria Legal Aid, response to questions on notice, p. 2; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 4.

272 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 16.

273 Ibid., p. 37; Vivienne Nguyen, Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 41; Bianca Johnston, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34; Darrylin Galanos, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30.

274 Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4; Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 8.

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Divert children and young people early from the justice system to therapeutic support,[275] particularly if the behaviour arises from disability or mental illness.[276] Therapeutic or other similar responses can hold young people accountable while acknowledging and addressing trauma, providing tailored support and recognising capacity for change.[277]

• **Minimising the impact of labels**: Labelling young people who have experienced family violence as a 'perpetrator' through justice responses can risk causing significant harm. This includes precluding them from key supports (like crisis accommodation) that may help address the harmful behaviour,[278] and implementing risk management strategies.[279] This can reduce the risk of criminalising children and young people who use family violence, and contextualise how data on children and young people is captured, used and understood.[280]

There is limited understanding of the scope of therapeutic interventions needed for young people who use family violence.[281] Additional data collection can enhance understanding of how many children and young people require tailored programs and what programs to fund.[282] Inquiry stakeholders identified policy responses and funding allocation should place greater focus on early intervention,[283] including potentially through a specific early intervention strategy for young people.[284]

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275   Victoria Legal Aid, response to questions on notice, p. 2; YSAS, response to questions on notice, p. 2; Dr Jill Gallagher, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, public hearing, Melbourne, 9 September 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9; Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, pp. 1, 4.

276   Victoria Legal Aid, response to questions on notice, p. 2.

277   MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 5; YSAS, response to questions on notice, p. 2; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 10; Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information,* p. 8; Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 2.

278   Victoria Legal Aid, response to questions on notice, p. 2; Berry Street, response to questions on notice, pp. 2–3; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 5; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 38; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 15. Proactive and perverse use of data on children and young people's use of family violence may also lead to a disproportionate focus from Child Protection if they subsequently have their own children, when additional support should be provided instead, see Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 38.

279   Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9.

280   Ibid.; Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, p. 3; Dom Ennis, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35.

281   Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information*, p. 8. See also Australian Government funding for a national early intervention trial for young men and boys at risk of using family, domestic and sexual violence, The Hon Amanda Rishworth MP, *Early intervention for adolescent young men and boys to end gender-based violence*, media release, Ministers for the Department of Social Services, 24 September 2024.

282   Darrylin Galanos, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

283   Victoria Legal Aid, response to questions on notice, p. 2; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30; Darrylin Galanos, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

284   Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 5.

Case Study 3.1 Meli—using data to tailor responses for young men

Meli is the largest provider of services for people who use family violence across the Barwon area.

'We developed the cognitive impairment program because we identified that men were presenting with acquired brain injuries. We have just created a young men's group—18 to 25—based on the data that we were capturing that more young men were coming through our service that had first point of contact with the justice system, and we were like, 'Wouldn't it be amazing if we could run a program that would capture those men, and it's a different intervention?' It is still an MBC[P], it is still holding them accountable, but we are implementing things like tech abuse and those sorts of things that are relevant to that age bracket and that cohort of young men. That was purely captured on the basis of the data that we capture. We were just seeing a trend that the age bracket was coming down lower and lower and we think we need to do something a little bit different. Really, a lot of it just informs in house how we might want to do things or what services we want to get engaged at our centre, but it also allows us to speak to you or speak to government or whoever else in relation to what are we seeing. What is the percentage of men coming through with mental health? We would be able to tell you. The percentage with disability, gambling, financial distress, homelessness—we would be able to tell someone those figures, but we do certainly do it to complement our own service as well.'

Source: Lisa Robinson, Director, Family Safety and Therapeutic Services, Meli, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence,* p. 25.

FSV is evaluating its adolescent violence in the home therapeutic support program, and these program providers have valuable data on children and young people.[285] FSV stated that the Victorian Government's strategy and response to family violence is an 'integrated approach' from primary prevention to response, with 'tailored responses to children and young people' sitting under the umbrella strategy to prevent silos. FSV further stated that children and young people have been a focus of Victorian Government strategies and action plans.[286]

FINDING 56: Better capturing and contextualising data on children and young people who experience and use family violence would help inform their support needs, guide service planning and staff training needs, develop programs, inform early intervention initiatives and prevent future risk of children and young people using violence. This will also increase understanding about the characteristics, volume and patterns of young people who use family violence.

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285 Amber Griffiths, Executive Director, Family and Sexual Violence Programs, Family Safety Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 71.

286 Ibid.

3.5.2 Strengthening databases and definitions for children and young people

Consistency in data collection for children and young people is key,[287] including consistent terminology to aid the collection of accurate and reliable data.[288] See Part 2, Section 2.1. The '[p]recise age ranges used for reporting the health of young people varies between data sources, but generally includes teenagers and young adults up to the age of 24'.[289]

Children and young people's capacity for change and unique needs—and the impacts of labelling young people as perpetrators—make it challenging to appropriately capture, record, share and transfer data for this cohort. Inquiry stakeholders identified some challenges associated with current data capture mechanisms including:

- **Service delivery challenges**: Service providers may not be funded to continue working with a young person once they turn 18.[290] Data can be lost when a young person is moved from family, child or youth services to mainstream services, and there is no onus to share information back to the initial service provider to keep track of that young person or monitor outcomes.[291] Data about children and young people's experiences of family violence are not always shared with residential or out-of-home-care services to provide wrap around, therapeutic support.[292]

- **Database challenges**: Data on young people may be held in different databases and not visible to relevant service providers.[293] Data systems do not support transferring information about a young person when they turn 18, with data transfer often occurring manually.[294] Some databases were designed to capture data on adults and not all data fields are applicable to understanding young people's use of family violence.[295]

- **Data collection process challenges**: Data collection processes and systems usually connect children and young people to women (primarily victim survivors) rather than men (predominantly people who use family violence).[296]

- **Perceptions of data collection challenges**: Departments may regard data about children and young people 'as in the too hard basket, due to ethics and other challenges'.[297]

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287 Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 15; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 6.

288 YSAS, *Submission 9*, p. 7; Bianca Johnston, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33; Darrylin Galanos, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

289 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Health of young people*, 16 April 2024, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/health-of-young-people> accessed 26 September 2024.

290 Amy Cupper, Manager of Family Safety, Mallee Accommdation and Support Program, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 38–39.

291 Sameera Fieldgrass, Practice Lader, Sector and Community Partnerships, Centre for Multicultural Youth, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

292 Jac Dwyer, Practice Development, Training and Capacity Building Projects, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49; Tom Bowerman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

293 Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29.

294 Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 17; Sameera Fieldgrass, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

295 Lauren Famulari, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 53.

296 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 5.

297 Ibid.

There are benefits to having data following children and young people as they access services and grow older to capture their journey and experiences as children.[298] Current clinical understandings of young people's cognitive development until the age of 25 is inconsistent with approaches that use the age of 18 to move young people from the children's system into the adult system.[299] It can be challenging for service providers and young people when someone aged 17 receives certain types of support, but once they turn 18 they are responded to through the adult service system.[300] Therapeutic responses that acknowledge childhood experiences should not stop when someone turns 18.[301]

Identifying a young person as a person using family violence means they are easier to track through FVISS and CISS, but it does not recognise capacity for change if that record follows them throughout adulthood.[302] Strategies to mitigate the potential impacts of recording data identifying young people as users of family violence are required.

Useful data collection about young people who use family violence can be sourced through non-punitive pathways out of violence, building a fuller understanding of this cohort.[303] Youth-centred approaches can be embedded into systems and databases that prioritise the best interests of the child.[304]

Having datasets for young people would help link data collected for children and adult victim survivors.[305] Adopting a nuanced understanding of children and young people that distinguishes between ages 0–12, 12–18 and 18–24, and adults could be beneficial.[306] The Committee notes that, while it is a broader policy question, extending services for children and young people who use family violence from the age of 18 onwards could have positive impacts by fostering a more nuanced understanding of their needs and experiences. Building data systems that 'ensure children and young people can access services without historic records continuing to impact their lives, in line with criminal record disclosure timelines and spent convictions schemes' could also be of benefit.[307] A youth-specific dataset with tailored terminology could also be explored.[308]

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298   Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29; Darrylin Galanos, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 57.

299   Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 15. The *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) Part 4 defines an adult as 18 and a child as under 18.

300   Darrylin Galanos, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

301   Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information*, p. 8.

302   Amy Cupper, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 38–39.

303   Tracey Golder, Program Manager, Specialist Family Violence, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 57.

304   Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 16.

305   Sameera Fieldgrass, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 43.

306   Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 16; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 15.

307   Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 15.

308   Dom Ennis, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 36.

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The Committee received evidence that, currently Victoria Police L17 referrals to TODs do not easily distinguish between adult respondents and those aged under 18. This means TOD staff systematically go through the Victorian Police referrals to ensure they go to the appropriate team. It was suggested to the Committee that a separate L17 portal or automatic separation for young people could be of benefit.[309] The Committee considers it important that the Victorian Government work with Victoria Police to enhance processes for sending L17 reports to TODs, ensuring clear differentiation between children and young people and adults who use family violence.

Contextualising the reporting of family violence-related data for children and young people involves recognising particular dynamics and experiences.[310] See Section 3.5.1. This can help give the data meaning.[311] Distinguishing adolescent and adult data on family violence can help shed light on the specific needs of children and young people and help tailor interventions.[312] This data could be reported separately to adult data.[313]

FINDING 57: Current criminal and systems responses that use the age of 18 to distinguish between children and adults are inconsistent with clinical understandings of young people's cognitive development until the age of 25, leading to inconsistent data collection and service provision as a young person ages. The Victorian Government can continuously improve how data and data capture and sharing mechanisms can provide meaningful insight into children and young people's use of family violence. This includes adopting a nuanced understanding of children and young people that distinguishes between ages 0–12, 12–18 and 18–24.

RECOMMENDATION 43: The Victorian Government collaborate with specialist family violence service providers and Victoria Police to review how data about children and young people who experience and use family violence is captured, used and understood. A related data collection, storage, linkage and reporting framework should be developed to:

• apply an age and development lens

• recognise experiences, intersectionality, capacity for change and the impacts of labels

• explore options to improve the L17 referral process to The Orange Doors to more easily identify young people.

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309 Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 32.

310 Elia Pourasgheri, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17.

311 Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 15.

312 Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

313 FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 2.

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3.5.3 The Orange Door and justice responses to children and young people

Children and young people should be recognised as victim survivors in their own right.[314] This means not subsuming them under a MARAM risk assessment for an adult victim survivor,[315] as children and young people experience family violence differently.[316]

FSV outlined that TODs assess every child and young person and create an individual case and client role (differentiating between children and young people requiring support, and/or experiencing or using family violence).[317] A MARAM risk assessment is completed for each child. TODs are supported by statewide guidance on completing risk assessments for children and young people,[318] along with eight practice guides 'to keep children and young people first and foremost in our service system responses by building greater practitioner confidence and capability'.[319] Tailored and interactive sessions to all TODs on children and young people's wellbeing commenced in 2024.[320]

TOD practitioner training on children and young people includes induction training and any time access to a learning portal. See FSV's responses to questions on notice for further detail on the practice guides and training.[321]

The Committee heard a different view about child MARAM risk assessments. The Centre for Innovative Justice at RMIT University (CIJ) submitted that despite child MARAM risk assessments being a legislative requirement, there is a low rate of risk assessments completed for children.[322] Instead, CIJ advised that young children are subsumed under the experience of a protective parent—often during ongoing service contact—and that young people unaccompanied by a parent can disappear from view after initial intake.[323] CIJ suggested TODs could provide greater support to children and young people as victim survivors, presenting an opportunity to increase understanding of their experiences.[324] The introduction of a specific child and young person MARAM tool is a good starting point that will help capture data on this cohort of people using family violence. This tool and relevant practice guides are anticipated for release in 2025.[325] TODs could further benefit from introducing youth-specific roles.[326]

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314 Victoria Legal Aid, response to questions on notice, p. 2; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 4.

315 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 8; McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, p. 8; Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivor Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 2.

316 McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, p. 8.

317 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, response to written questions on notice, pp. 2, 3.

318 Ibid., p. 5.

319 Ibid., p. 3.

320 Ibid., pp. 3–4.

321 Ibid.

322 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, pp. 7–8.

323 Ibid., pp. 8, 12–13. Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University suggested this was partly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and may not have improved.

324 Ibid., p. 17.

325 Victorian Government, *MARAM practice guidance: Quarter 1 2024–25*, 4 December 2024, <https://www.vic.gov.au/maramis-quarterly-newsletter-quarter-1-2024-25/maram-practice-guidance> accessed 17 January 2025.

326 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 17; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 5.

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Child and family services cannot always access information captured by MARAM or CISS, due to inconsistent organisational alignment to MARAM and barriers to information sharing if family consent is not provided. This means data to support the whole family is not shared.[327] Some service providers with programs for young people using family violence may not be able to access data like offending histories, trauma or service engagement, without being designated a specialist family violence service—meaning service providers are unable to fully understand client needs and tailor support.[328]

Increased clarity on responsibilities and awareness that sharing data about children and young people is critical to improve safety and prevent family violence could address variable levels of information sharing between services because some providers do not see children and young people as their responsibility. A potential option is to establish children and young people data custodians to feed information across systems and services, particularly data on risk.[329]

FINDING 58: The Orange Door Network and the new child and young person Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework tool present opportunities to:

- collect more family violence-related data and information about children and young people experiencing and using family violence

- share that data and information more proactively with service providers working with children and young people.

RECOMMENDATION 44: The Victorian Government:

- monitor, review and report back to the family violence sector on the impact of the child and young person Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework tool within six months of the tool being released

- increase information sharing between The Orange Door Network and youth-specific service providers to enhance the delivery of informed and nuanced support.

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327   Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 2.

328   Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 3.

329   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 5.

Early intervention and support for children and young people can help divert them from the justice system. Providing appropriate justice responses requires recognising the dynamics and contexts for children and young people in Section 3.5.1.[330] For example, ensuring children and young people are identified correctly in FVIO applications is crucial to ensuring the system provides nuanced responses to children and young people's use of family violence.[331]

Victoria Police's framework for responding to family violence could be more responsive and tailored to the needs and experiences of children and young people.[332] An unintended impact of Victoria's proactive legislation to address family violence is that young people are drawn into the justice system—instead of receiving support because they have experienced/are experiencing family violence themselves, or because behaviours of concern are due to unmet support needs for disability or neurodivergence.[333]

Victoria Police recognised 'the last thing parents want to do is call the police on their children, but that is a growing different dynamic within family violence reporting' so Victoria Police 'have got to continually tailor our responses to give police the tools to recognise what might be the best option when they attend these incidents'.[334]

FINDING 59: While early intervention and diversion from the justice system is key (where appropriate through therapeutic and multifaceted support), justice responses to children and young people's use of family violence (including by Victoria Police and courts) should apply an age and developmental lens. It should also recognise experiences, intersectionality, capacity for change and the impacts of labels to maximise children and young people's chances of receiving appropriate support to change behaviour.

3.5.4   Building a more holistic understanding

There is limited understanding of, and data collection about, the experiences of children and young people connected to, involved with or affected by people using family violence.[335] Enhancing data collection on the experiences and perspectives of children and young people can help develop a comprehensive understanding of family violence and design effective support systems and interventions.[336]

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330 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, pp. 22–26. This submission includes a discussion of standard legal responses to family violence and the impacts of disability or trauma.

331 Ibid., p. 30. MCV did not respond to the Committee's written question on notice about opportunities to connect young people's use of family violence to past experiences as victim survivors through MCV record or data collection, to form a full understanding of the pathways to using family violence. See the Committee's written questions on notice to MCV and MCV's response on the Committee's website: Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee, *Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria: Submissions*, n.d., <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/inquiry-into-capturing-data-on-family-violence-perpetrators-in-victoria/submissions> accessed 20 December 2024.

332 Ibid., p. 20.

333 Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2.

334 Lauren Callaway, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

335 ANROWS, response to questions on notice, p. 5.

336 Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

For children and young people, Inquiry stakeholders suggested there is inadequate data collection and analysis of:

- the life course of people who use family violence, including trajectories/pathways for young people and relationships between past experiences and future use of family violence[337] (see Section 3.1)

- longitudinal outcomes for children or young people involved in service system responses or out-of-home care[338]

- contextual and intersectional factors like LGBTIQA+ identity,[339] homelessness,[340] youth suicide[341] (see Part 4, Section 4.3.2), history and impacts of trauma on development,[342] geographical location,[343] mental health and substance misuse[344]

- different forms or experiences of youth-related family violence,[345] including adolescents using violence in the home,[346] youth intimate partner violence/dating violence,[347] substance use coercion,[348] and family violence in out-of-home or residential care[349]

- sibling-to-sibling family violence, prevalence, nature and scope[350]

- sexual violence (including harmful sexual behaviours and new forms of sexual violence, like deepfakes) and the programs to address sexual violence[351]

- the relationship between different types of youth-perpetrated family violence and wider community and peer influences,[352] and attitudes and behaviours of children and young people[353]

- the normalisation of technology and impacts on family violence[354]

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337 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, pp. 37–38; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 15; Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information*, p. 8; Sameera Fieldgrass, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48; Dr Hayley Boxall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33.

338 Tracey Golder, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 55; Sameera Fieldgrass, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

339 Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, pp. 5–6.

340 Ibid.

341 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 15.

342 Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, p. 5.

343 YSAS, response to questions on notice, p. 3.

344 Tracey Golder, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 55.

345 Darrylin Galanos, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

346 MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 4; Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 2.

347 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 38; MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 4; Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information*, p. 9; Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 2.

348 YSAS, *Submission 9*, p. 7.

349 MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 4; Tom Bowerman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

350 Hayley Boxall, Silke Meyer and Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Sibling to sibling violence in Australia: summary report*, ANU, Griffith University and Monash University, 2024.

351 Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 1.

352 Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 38.

353 Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2.

354 Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information*, p. 9.

- parent use of FVIOs and systems abuse (e.g. withholding consent for services) against children and young people as a form of family violence[355]—VLA's experience suggests FVIO applications against children are increasing and it was expected to release research on this issue in late 2024[356]

- early indicators of children and young people's use of family violence[357]

- experiences and needs of children and young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds who use or are at risk of using family violence, including risk and protective factors and drivers[358]

- scope and prevalence,[359] including quantity and incidents of family violence involving children and young people,[360] and the impacts of family violence on children and young people[361]

- desistance and intervention effectiveness.[362]

Children and young people as victim survivors in their own right and adolescent family violence, were a research priority of the Family Violence Research Agenda 2021–2024.[363] See Appendix C. Inquiry stakeholders' suggested ways to increase data collection including:

- **Collect data from early intervention points**: Systematically recording data about children and young people using violence from hospitals, including emergency departments and mental health services,[364] as well as youth homelessness services[365] and schools.[366] Disengagement from school is an early indicator of experiencing family violence and schools have visibility of family dynamics[367] (school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic affected the identification of family violence, and the impacts of this should be considered when interpreting data).[368] Data gathered by maternal and child health services during appointments can be better integrated with family violence data.[369]

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355   Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 27.

356   Victoria Legal Aid, response to questions on notice, p. 3.

357   Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 3; MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 4.

358   Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, pp. 5, 9.

359   MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 4; YSAS, response to questions on notice, p. 3; Professor Michael Flood, Professor, QUT Centre for Justice, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29; Dr Hayley Boxall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29.

360   Mitchell Shire Council, *Submission 66*, p. 4.

361   FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 1.

362   YSAS, response to questions on notice, p. 3; Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 3–4.

363   Victorian Government, *Progressing research on family violence*, 21 February 2022, <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-family-violence-research-agenda-2021-2024/progressing-research-family-violence> accessed 20 May 2024.

364   MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 5.

365   Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 17.

366   Dr Kristin Diemer, Principal Research Fellow, The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, public hearing, Melbourne, 22 July 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25.

367   Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 17; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

368   Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, pp. 13, 17.

369   Mitchell Shire Council, *Submission 66*, p. 4.

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- **Improve research**: This includes quantitative, qualitative and longitudinal research, like surveys—with appropriate ethics and safeguards in place[370] (see Part 4, Sections 4.1 and 4.2)

- **Improve outcomes data**: This includes data from the whole family and young people's engagement with family—especially about outcomes for young people who have used harmful sexual behaviour who do not have contact with the justice system[371] (see Part 1, Section 1.5.2 for general discussion on measuring outcomes)

- **Build a holistic understanding of experiences**: A holistic understanding of children and young people's history and experiences, including involvement with child protection, previous FVIO involvement, experiences of misidentification, and study or work engagement.[372] Understanding children and young people's experiences of family violence helps provide information on the patterns of perpetration against them.[373] The voices of children and young people should be listened to, with a trusted adult or parent present, where appropriate, or information obtained from service providers supporting children and young people.[374]

Reporting by staff in different services is important if children and young people are experiencing family violence by a guardian or parent.[375] Reporting and information sharing about children and young people—including through schools—should be handled sensitively to not erase a young person's trust in services.[376] The capability of service providers to collect family violence data about children and young people can be improved. See Part 2, Sections 2.1.3 and 2.2. The Committee notes that it did not receive evidence from the Victorian Department of Education, schools or other education providers. This limited its ability to make substantive findings and recommendations in this area.

Data on children and young people is collected as part of the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme,[377] Child Safe Standards[378] and mandatory reporting to Child Protection.[379] The Committee received little evidence on these data collection

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370   Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15; Professor Michael Flood, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29; Dr Hayley Boxall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29; Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2.

371   Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 8.

372   Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 15.

373   Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 16.

374   Ibid.; Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivor Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 2.

375   National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 7.

376   Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 17; Bianca Johnston, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30.

377   Commission for Children and Young People, *Reportable Conduct Scheme*, <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/reportable-conduct-scheme> accessed 26 September 2024.

378   Commission for Children and Young People, *Raising concerns about child safety*, <https://ccyp.vic.gov.au/child-safe-standards/raising-child-safety-matters> accessed 26 September 2024.

379   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Mandatory reporting*, 15 November 2024, <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/mandatory-reporting> accessed 26 September 2024.

mechanisms[380] and due to complexity, confidentiality and the potential for adverse impacts,[381] has not made findings or recommendations about their potential utility to help form a better understanding of people's experiences and use of family violence.

FINDING 60: Further research and analysis would assist the Victorian Government to better understand the nuances, contexts and scope of children and young people's use of family violence. Collecting additional data in relation to children and young people could help inform supports and early intervention, including through hospitals, emergency departments, mental health services, schools and maternal and child health services, and from qualitative and quantitative research and outcomes data.

RECOMMENDATION 45: The Victorian Government support service providers, including schools and education providers, to better capture and analyse data on children and young people to prioritise early intervention, while applying an age and developmental lens, and recognising experiences, intersectionality, capacity for change and the impact of labels.

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380 Mitchell Shire Council, *Submission 66*, p. 5; Monash City Council, *Submission 21*, received 30 May 2024, p. 5; Peter Dickinson, Lawyer, Villamanta Disability Rights Legal Service, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4; MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, p. 5.

381 For example, increased parental anxiety about reporting family violence leading to the removal of children, see Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 24.

Learning what works: programs for people using family violence
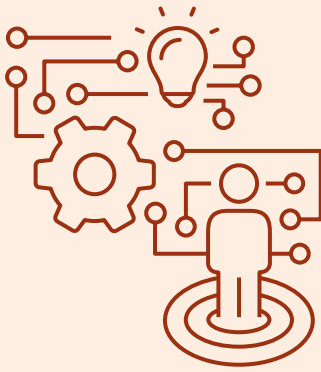
A range of programs are designed and delivered for people who use family violence.[a] Learning from these programs and the people who engage with them presents a key opportunity to increase understanding of people using family violence.

Despite past research and evaluation of programs for people who use family violence, the development of Men's Behaviour Change Minimum Standards (MBC Minimum Standards) and FVRIM's 2023 report *Service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family* (see Appendix C for information on these initiatives and other state and federal work on interventions), more can be done to build the evidence base about people using family violence.

Inquiry stakeholders identified a need to better understand:

- rates of program completion and attendance[b] (noting this does not indicate engagement),[c] profiles of people that attend or drop out,[d] and barriers to engagement[e]

- effectiveness, value and outcomes of interventions,[f] including long-term behaviour change and program efficacy,[g] what interventions are achieving, who they are reaching and why,[h] what is best practice,[i] and what might work better[j]

- what types and elements (for example, group work) of services, programs or interventions are the most helpful and result in better outcomes,[k] and what works for different people at different times (and the role of pre-program readiness programs)[l]

- what successful interventions look like, how programs fit into broader work on desistance, and the feasibility of using brief interventions in isolation from other support networks or system reforms[m]

- desistance measures (from reduction to cessation of behaviour),[n] measures that prevent re-offending,[o] rates of recidivism post-program completion, including those reported to a different agency than the one who delivered the program,[p] and measures that keep people who use family violence away from victim survivors in their home[q]

(continued)

a This includes MBCPs, case management, accommodation-based interventions, community programs for First Nations peoples and diverse cohorts (including men from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, women who use force, men with cognitive impairment and people from LGBTIQA+ communities), fathering interventions, a serious risk program, post-group interventions and programs for young people who use family violence. For more details, see Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, received 17 July 2024, pp. 4–5. **b** Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, p. 3; National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, p. 3. **c** Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39. **d** Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, pp. 7, 8. **e** Tracey Golder, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 55. **f** Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 4; Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, p. 4; Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 2; ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 6; FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 3; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 4; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 11; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, pp. 7, 8; The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, p. 5; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Caroline Counsel, Co-Chair of the Family Violence Working Group, Law Institute of Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 5. **g** Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 3; National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, p. 3; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 8; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 8; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22. **h** Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3. **i** Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 4; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9. **j** Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3. **k** Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, p. 5; Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 1; ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 6; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 4. **l** Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 22, 27. **m** The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 8; Dr Hayley Boxall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24. **n** The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 8; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 7. **o** Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 11. **p** The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 8. **q** Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 11.

(continued)

- level of demand and program waitlists,[a] duplicate referrals (for example, TOD referrals and self-referrals),[b] people who are referred to a program but drop out while on a waitlist,[c] how people's circumstances change while on a waitlist,[d] visibility of people who use family violence accessing non-accredited MBCPs or therapeutic services that are not MARAM-aligned,[e] and why and how many people are turned away from programs (and what the level of need is)[f]

- how people engage in programs as a compliance requirement,[g] and if perpetrators use completed programs as 'proof' of behaviour change but continue to use family violence.[h]

FINDING 61: There are many opportunities to build a better understanding of people who use family violence through more research on what programs and interventions work for diverse people who use family violence at different times and life stages, and increased visibility of how people access and use programs and how behaviours change over time.

a National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, p. 3; Kristy Berryman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25. **b** The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 7. **c** Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 19. **d** Kristy Berryman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25. **e** Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 5. **f** Rebecca Buys, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 55. **g** Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39. **h** Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 4.

Program evaluations and data capture

While some contract/funding program data is consistently provided to government, other profile and volume data is collected inconsistently, with variations in practice, assessment tools, definitions and software.[a]

Some programs/providers may collect data on demographics, referral information, FVIOs, risk and other assessments, contact by workers, date of engagement, service completion, disengagement and reason, case management duration, and co-occurring factors like mental health, substance use, housing and financial stress. While this data provides valuable insight into the profile and volume of people who use family violence, the lack of consistency, resources and capacity to oversee collection and collation to see trends, places constraints on the meaningful use of this data.[b]

Inconsistent program delivery across interventions also makes it harder to monitor effectiveness.[c] For example, Meli provides a 27-week MBCP compared to the standard 20 weeks. Meli also finds the data it collects outside of funding reporting and database requirements is more relevant and important to identifying gaps and targeting interventions.[d]

Inquiry stakeholders supported increasing funding for evaluation and research to build evidence and data[e] and expanding the scale and diversity of programs that integrate findings from pilot program evaluations (see below).[f] This evidence and knowledge on what works, built through program trials and evaluations, should be integrated into practice.[g]

Short-term program funding can impact the ability to deliver and evaluate innovative approaches.[h] Pilot programs develop a wealth of knowledge on best practice, but short-term, one-off funding prevents integration of findings into future programs.[i]

Evidence suggests this is a lost opportunity, as real change is achieved through longer-term, holistic interventions with sustainable funding, including

for evaluation.[j] For example, RESTORE was a pilot program for young people issued with FVIOs developed by MCV and Jesuit Social Services. Despite an evaluation by The University of Melbourne finding many therapeutic benefits[k] and the program seeking to extend referral pathways beyond the court to agencies, funding was discontinued in 2022.[l]

The current focus on data for reporting and funding requirements hampers efforts to develop innovative ways of working with people who use family violence.[m] See Part 1, Section 1.5. A more strategic and holistic approach requires sustained funding to build the evidence base of what works over time.[n] This enables staff time to be allocated to developing and entering core data consistently in preparation for annual reporting requirements and making rigorous program data available for future internal and external evaluations.[o]

MCV collects data from service providers contracted to provide counselling under the Court Mandated Counselling Orders Program.[p] Data is collected to track program completion and service provider performance and to inform program evaluations.[q] Inquiry stakeholders reported issues with perpetrators attending court-mandated programs, including that a person may subsequently be assessed as unsuitable to attend or they may stop attending (sometimes with an excuse, such as work conflicts) with no means to enforce attendance.[r] MCV is implementing a new counselling program in 2025, with Magistrates to 'recommence making counselling orders at [Specialist Family Violence Court] venues' from January and February in headquarter courts across Victoria.[s]

Corrections Victoria advised it is not collecting data on MBCP outcomes, but is collecting data on demand, throughput and processes, and some two-year recidivism data. Corrections Victoria identified evaluating its programs would be beneficial.[t]

a Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, pp. 1–2. b Ibid., p. 2. c The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 4; Bernadette McCartney, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23. d Bernadette McCartney, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23; Kristy Berryman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23. e Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 7. f No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 21. g Ibid. h Australian Association for Restorative Justice, *Submission 10*, pp. 2–3. i No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 21; Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information,* p. 2. j Ibid., pp. 21–22. k This included better understanding of patterns of violence in the family, young people and affected family members acknowledging and working to address harm, engaging family in safety planning discussions and extended family to help, linking families with services and improving communication and healthy relationships. l Australian Association for Restorative Justice, *Submission 10*, pp. 2–3. m Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39. n Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 7; Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information,* p. 2. o Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information,* p. 2. p Magistrates' Court of Victoria, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria, response to written questions on notice received 25 October 2024, p. 5. q Ibid. r Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 20, 29. s Magistrates' Court of Victoria, *Counselling orders*, 6 January 2025, <https://www.mcv.vic.gov.au/intervention-orders/family-violence-intervention-orders/counselling-orders> accessed 14 January 2025; Magistrates' Court of Victoria, *Annual report 2023–24*, 2024, p. 8. Victoria's headquarter Courts are located in Heidelberg, Bendigo, Ballarat, Geelong, Latrobe Valley, Sunshine, Broadmeadows, Shepparton, Dandenong, Frankston, Melbourne, Moorabbin, and Ringwood. t Jenny Hosking, Assistant Commissioner, Sentence Management, Corrections Victoria, Department of Justice and Community Safety, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 19.

Inquiry stakeholders supported improving program data capture, evaluations and research,[a] with suggestions including:

- **Capture longitudinal outcomes**[b]
  Currently, research is limited to data collected on program completion or a short period of post-program follow-up.[c] Post-program longitudinal studies (see Part 4, Section 4.1.4) are also rare, and where they do exist, they focus on recidivism that does not show the complete story.[d] Increased capture of post-program/intervention longitudinal data can help to understand desistance and trajectories for change in the context of continued service and system engagement, and what additional support is needed.[e]

- **Understand MBCPs in life context and acknowledge complexity**
  Isolating the social impacts of an MBCP is 'really hard', making investment in developing an approach to understand MBCPs in the context of other things happening in someone's life important.[f] Different parts of programs and interventions, referral pathways and practice models/delivery styles will work for different people. Sometimes programs will not work, particularly if people are not ready to engage. A simplistic understanding of whether MBCPs work or not, does not account for this nuance and complexity.[g]

- **Centrally record outcomes**
  Improvements include centrally recording and monitoring outcomes after service and program engagement,[h] centrally capturing data on disengagement or removal from mandated and voluntary MBCPs,[i] capturing post-program data beyond incidents resulting in criminal charges at regular intervals,[j] supporting service providers to share more information back to the referring agency,[k] and sharing more data on what happens after case closure/program completion, can help build a fuller picture of risk for returning clients

and to measure, understand and prevent recidivism.[l] Inquiry stakeholders supported implementing the 2023 FVRIM report's suggested action to establish a centralised database for perpetrator interventions that includes participant attrition/completions.[m]

- **Prioritise qualitative measurement**[n]
  Trial and test new approaches to capture qualitative data to improve the rigour and meaningfulness of program evaluations data.[o]

- **Trial a minimum dataset**
  Trial a minimum dataset for MBCPs that prioritises meaningful qualitative data over 'big data',[p] and where possible, qualitative data recorded and coded numerically to more easily analyse change over time.[q] A minimum dataset should include data that is useful, accurate, available and rigorous. It would also require 'respect for data sovereignty, privacy, collaborative data governance and collaborative data analysis'.[r]

- **Collect more data from the outset**
  Currently, evaluations may be funded when programs/interventions are underway, meaning data is not collected from the beginning or over time.[s] More high-quality data can be collected to inform program design and delivery to ensure effective outcomes,[t] including data during progress reviews[u] and from program facilitators, particularly for long-term groups, on the value or impact of programs.[v] This aligns with the 2023 FVRIM report suggestion to ensure 'appropriate data governance [for perpetrator interventions] from the outset to enable monitoring and sharing of information pertinent to evaluations and policy decisions across Victorian Government agencies'.[w]

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a Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 5. **b** Ibid.; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 8; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 8; Wendy Anders, Chief Executive Officer, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 13; Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information*, p. 2. **c** Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 5. **d** Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 37–38. **e** The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 8; Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, *Submission 20*, p. 3; Rasha Abbas, Chief Executive Officer, inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 47; Jessica Seamer, PhD Candidate, Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 37; Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 37–38; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 5. **f** Joshua Lourensz, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 18–19. **g** Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22. **h** Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 5. **i** Ibid. **j** Tarryn Chapman, Acting Principal Strategic Advisor, Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 20 August 2024, p. 1. **k** Australian Association for Restorative Justice, *Submission 10*, p. 7. **l** Tarryn Chapman, response to questions on notice, p. 1. **m** Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Key findings and suggested actions*, 10 May 2022, <https://www.fvrim.vic.gov.au/monitoring-victorias-family-violence-reforms-early-identification-family-violence-within-universal/key-findings-suggested-actions> accessed 18 November 2024; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 6; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 4. **n** ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 8. **o** Ibid., p. 11. **p** Ibid., p. 13. See also Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 11. **q** Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 21. **r** ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 13. **s** Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22. **t** inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 18. **u** Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, p. 4. **v** Ibid. **w** Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Key findings and suggested actions*; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 6; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 4.

(continued)

Bring data points together
Bring together information holistically to evaluate programs, for example, from completion reports, practitioners and people who use family violence multiple times after a program.[a] Technology and data systems require improvement to triangulate data, as enabling agencies to access data beyond recorded incidents enhances understandings of patterns.[b]

• **Provide more information to people using family violence service providers**
This includes information about all incidents of harm, not just those resulting in charges, which can signal patterns of behaviour (for example, coercive control), specific behaviours, risks of future violence and interventions offered and accepted/rejected from all services a person using family violence has engaged with, as well as information from victim survivor services.[c]

• **Review and update MBC Minimum Standards**
While the 2017 MBC Minimum Standards provide a consistent model for Victorian Government-funded MBCPs,[d] they do not include standards on data

collection.[e] The MBC Minimum Guidelines require updating to reflect current processes for risk assessment as a central element of MBCP work (in line with MARAM) and to provide guidance for all types of interventions (for example, service providers working with women and gender diverse people), including the delivery of interventions through an online format and undertaking program readiness work. A review should also explore how compliance with the standards will be assessed; and their relationship with the Australian Government's work to establish national standards.[f] The 2023 FVRIM report suggested the Victorian Government update the MBC Minimum Standards 'to reflect the current range of perpetrator interventions and best practices'.[g]

Program evaluations and data collected from MBCPs and other interventions form part of the broader evidence base that will help to provide a fuller understanding of the cohort of people using family violence. Evaluation and monitoring data on what works needs to be considered with the other data sources discussed in Part 4, Section 4.1.3.

FINDING 62: Increasing consistent, long-term, more nuanced and centrally recorded evaluation and data capture from interventions and programs for people who use family violence, beyond basic reporting and funding requirements, will broaden the evidence and knowledge base on what works. It will also help integrate learnings into practice and support the development of innovative ways of working with people who use family violence.

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a Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 37. **b** Tarryn Chapman, response to questions on notice, p. 1. **c** Australian Association for Restorative Justice, *Submission 10*, pp. 6–7. **d** Department of Families Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 7; Family Safety Victoria, *Men's Behaviour Change Minimum Standards*, 2017. **e** Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22. **f** No to Violence, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 10 September 2024, pp. 1–2. **g** See Appendix C and Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms—Service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family*, 2023.

Diversity and breadth of programs and trials

The 2023 FVRIM report noted that while the range of programs and services had increased, neither demand nor diversity of perpetrator need was being met, and successful pilot programs for diverse cohorts were not being scaled up. It suggested the Victorian Government '[i]nvest in scaling up promising pilot interventions to meet demand, in particular perpetrator accommodation programs, responses for refugees and migrants and case management to prepare perpetrators for group programs'.[a]

Inquiry stakeholders identified a need for increased availability, breadth and diversity of programs,[b] including long-term and voluntary programs.[c] Diversifying the services available will support 'behaviour change at different ages and stages as early as possible' that are 'contextualised to people's unique circumstances'.[d] Waitlists to access programs can be an issue. If by the time a person participates, they have solidified and entrenched beliefs and attitudes, the opportunity where people are more open to change is lost.[e]

Inquiry stakeholders identified a need to better understand what interventions work best for different/diverse cohorts.[f] This includes how interventions can be tailored for sexual violence[g] or violence against sex workers,[h] LGBTIQA+ communities,[i] and elder abuse (noting that people who perpetrate elder abuse are often different to those who use other family violence, for example it often involves abuse of parents by children).[j] Current frameworks guiding the development and delivery of interventions, including the MBC Minimum Standards, focus on domestic and gendered family violence and not the full range of family and sexual violence perpetrated by different cohorts of people.[k]

Inquiry stakeholders recommended scaling up and funding the development and evaluation of interventions and programs that fill service gaps, both inside and outside of mainstream MBCPs.[l] This includes programs for sexual violence accountability[m] (or placing more emphasis on sexual violence as a core component of existing programs accompanied by appropriate training),[n] and trauma-informed programs, services, case management and one-to-one counselling (for example, services that are First Nations healing-focused or community-led and targeted for culturally and racially marginalised men or men with complex factors that overlap with family violence use).[o] A stocktake of past interventions driven by communities that worked well could help identify what to scale up.[p] For example, programs that demonstrate success for First Nations communities,[q] AOD-specific MBCPs[r] or MBCPs run in-language for different cultural groups.[s]

a Ibid., p. 9. Perpetrator accommodation programs aim to keep victim survivors safe in their homes by providing alternative accommodation for perpetrators who are willing to engage in behaviour change interventions. Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms—Service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family*, p. 23. **b** Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 2; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 4; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 11; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 4; Juergen Kaehne, Principal Managing Lawyer, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12; Max Broadley, Independent Chair, Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29; Dr Jill Gallagher, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7. **c** Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, p. 5; Wendy Anders, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 13. **d** Max Broadley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29. **e** Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 8. **f** ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 6; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 4; Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 49, Attachment A*, received 31 May 2024, p. 18. **g** Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 1. **h** Project Respect, *Submission 24*, p. 4. **i** Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 4. **j** Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, pp. 12, 14; Ben Rogers, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29. **k** Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, p. 12. **l** No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 21. **m** Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, p. 5. **n** Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6; Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7. **o** No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 21. **p** Vivienne Nguyen, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49. **q** Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 12; Juergen Kaehne, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12; Patrick Cook, Head of Policy, Communications and Strategy, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12. **r** Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35. **s** Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 47.

Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to improve interventions and evaluations for diverse cohorts included:

- **Use data to understand and tailor interventions**
  Use data to understand what different communities need to tailor interventions[a] and provide more disaggregated family violence data on diverse cohorts for robust evaluations.[b] Use data on intersectional factors to ensure practitioners have the knowledge and skills to work with people with different issues[c] (for example, ensuring people taking part in MBCPs get adequate mental health assessments and therapy to understand the impacts of their childhood on their own behaviours).[d]

- **Generate evidence on what works**
  Increase research and evaluation to generate evidence and data on what works for different types of people who use family violence[e] and integrate research on innovative and emerging interventions to develop a broader range of effective, timely and targeted interventions.[f]

- **Support community-led evaluations**
  Specifically fund community-based service providers to evaluate and research smaller MBCPs for diverse cohorts,[g] evaluate programs in line with ethnic or First Nations cultures,[h] and ensure ACCOs and First Nations Communities are involved in program design, implementation and measurement and evaluation.[i]

FINDING 63: There are opportunities to scale up the availability, breadth and range of programs (including promising pilots) and interventions for people who use family violence. With greater program availability and more data collection, a better understanding of what programs and interventions work best for people from diverse cohorts at different life stages and contexts can be developed.

RECOMMENDATION 46: The Victorian Government implement and publicly report on actions taken in response to the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's suggested actions in the report *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms–Service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family* (2023) by June 2026, including:

- creating a centralised platform or database to monitor perpetrator intervention waitlists and participant completions

- scaling up promising pilot interventions to meet demand (including therapeutic interventions)

- updating the Men's Behaviour Change Minimum Standards to reflect a broader range of programs and best practices.

a inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 18. **b** Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 8. **c** Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, p. 4. **d** Professor Manjula O'Connor, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 44. **e** Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 4. **f** No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 5; Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7. **g** Patrick Cook, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12. **h** National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, p. 3. **i** Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 12.

Outcomes and evaluation framework

There is no nationally consistent data on outcomes for people using family violence collected through interventions and programs.[a] A key recommendation from Inquiry stakeholders was to co-develop, with the family violence sector, a consistent outcomes and/or evaluation framework for interventions using both qualitative and quantitative impact measurements.[b] This will help improve the quality and impact of services and interventions.[c]

Inquiry stakeholders suggested a monitoring and outcomes framework should:

- prioritise outcome over output measures [d] (see Part 1, Section 1.5), measure change in attitudes, behaviour and accountability,[e] change over time and program efficacy,[f] and overlay data on different intersectional factors[g] to measure outcomes and program effectiveness for complexities and overlapping intersectional co-occurrences like AOD use, mental health, past experiences and barriers to engagement[h]

- be accompanied by the increased capacity of service providers to complete qualitative and outcomes evaluations[i]

- be aligned with program reporting and contract/service delivery frameworks, to 'ensure funding reflects the real cost of delivering best practice interventions' and to 'enable deeper and more targeted understanding of the impacts of interventions' and 'what works to stop the use of family violence'[j]

- build monitoring and evaluation markers into data systems[k]

- align with the National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions[l]

- align with outcome measurements for victim-survivor services[m]

- be separate to but align with the FVOF[n]

- consistently collect client feedback from victim survivors and people who use family violence[o] and triangulate data from multiple sources (practitioners, people who use family violence, victim survivors) to build an understanding of behaviour[p]

- be fit-for-purpose for First Nations peoples, or consider a different framework for First Nations peoples[q]

- improve and standardise program-level evaluations for different cohorts of people who use family violence, for example children and young people or long-term perpetrators (this will also help compare different interventions).[r]

a Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, pp. 4–5. b inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, pp. 18, 19; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 4; Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 4; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 20; Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4; Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7; Phillip Ripper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 47; Olsen Clark, Policy and Advocacy Advisor, No to Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51. c No to Violence, *Submission 61*, pp. 19–20. d Ibid., pp. 5, 20; Olsen Clark, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 50–51. e No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 20. f Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22. g Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, p. 3. h Tracey Golder, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 55. i inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 19; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 20; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 8, 10; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 30. j No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 21; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22. k Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22. l No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 21. See Appendix C for further information. m Ibid.; Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6. n No to Violence, response to questions on notice, p. 2. o Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 2. p Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24. q Phillip Ripper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 54; Patrick Cook, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12. r Dr Amy Webster, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 3–4.

A core part of MBCPs is family safety contact work, which provides valuable information on people who use family violence and their behaviour outside of a program or other intervention.[a] See Part 2, Section 2.4.3. Data collected from victim survivor services can also help measure efficacy of interventions and violence reduction and rehabilitation programs.[b] An outcomes and evaluations framework should measure safety and wellbeing of victim survivors[c] and hear from victim survivors (with full consent to participate and strong privacy and safety considerations),[d] and be accompanied by funding for family safety contact work,[e] including with reportable targets.[f]

The 2023 FVRIM report noted the Victorian Government had adopted the Expert Advisory Committee on Perpetrator Intervention's 2018 'advice on establishing a common evaluation framework for perpetrator interventions to ensure rigour and consistency in evaluations and better comparison of outcomes'.[g] FSV has a guidance document on 'Key Evaluation Questions to Examine the Implementation of Perpetrator Interventions'. The 2023 FVRIM report stated that this document 'provides solid and clear guidance regarding evaluation themes'.[h]

There is no Victorian Government response to this report, nor a requirement to provide one. FSV identified in this Inquiry, it had not progressed the recommendation to establish a common evaluation framework, but is 'continuing to work through' it. Because several interventions are newer, FSV has been 'letting them run' to generate sufficient data to make evaluations meaningful. Some of the programs have been evaluated separately, but not against a common framework. FSV advised that the perpetrator study announced in May 2024 (see Part 4, Section 4.1.4) will guide the development

of a common evaluation framework, by identifying the outcomes that should be evaluated.[i] FSV stated 'this is a two-year study and of quite a significant scale'.[j]
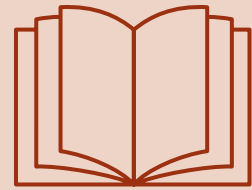
FSV noted improving outcomes measures and indicators, how service providers are asked to measure outcomes and standardised data collection to compare results in the FVOF (including under *Domain 3: Perpetrators are held accountable, connected and take responsibility for stopping their violence*) will be a focus of the next rolling action plan.[k] This refers to the 2025–2027 Rolling Action Plan under the *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's 10 year plan*. It has not yet been released. See Part 1, *Victoria's approach to ending family violence* (Figure).

The Committee's view is that it is an opportune time to create an integrated and consistent framework for both outcomes and evaluations of interventions and programs that considers the suggestions made by Inquiry stakeholders, noting:

- the recommendation to establish a common evaluation framework was first made in 2018

- the suggested actions in the 2023 FVRIM report

- the perpetration study is a two-year study

- improving how service providers are asked to measure outcomes including under *Domain 3: Perpetrators are held accountable, connected and take responsibility for stopping their violence* will be a focus of the next 2025–2027 Rolling Action plan under the *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's 10 year plan*.

a Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 11; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24; Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 37; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31; Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information*, p. 2. **b** Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 19. **c** No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 20. **d** Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 4. **e** Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, p. 11. **f** No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 20. **g** Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms—Service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family*, p. 35. **h** Ibid. see also Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 72. **i** Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 72. **j** Ibid., p. 60. **k** Ibid., p. 70.

FINDING 64: An integrated, consistent and strategic outcomes and evaluation framework on programs and interventions for people who use family violence would support the collection of consistent and longitudinal data, create more opportunities to triangulate data, build knowledge over time and improve the quality and impact of services and interventions when learnings are integrated into practice. In line with Finding 5, it is important that the Victorian Government apply Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles when developing this framework, to ensure First Nations communities have control over their data and how it is used.

RECOMMENDATION 47: The Victorian Government consult with the family violence sector to implement an integrated, consistent and strategic outcomes and evaluation framework for programs and interventions for a diverse range of people who use family violence that includes longitudinal and qualitative data from a variety of sources (including victim survivors). This framework should be aligned with the Family Violence Outcomes Framework, service delivery reporting requirements, federal frameworks on perpetrator interventions, Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles and enhanced information sharing where appropriate.

Part 4
How to improve our understanding

What the Committee heard

Part 4 | How to improve our understanding

In its most fundamental sense, data represents raw, unprocessed facts. But when collated, analysed, contextualised and interpreted, data becomes meaningful. When we talk about perpetrator data, we are therefore talking about people. We need to keep front of mind that behind each perpetrator statistic are women and children whose lives have been profoundly impacted by the perpetrator's choice to use violence.

Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee

Our understanding of, and information about, perpetrators of violence is seen through the eyes of victim survivors and frontline workers. This information is extremely valuable and could inform the wider sector on the profile and/or volume of perpetrators. However, there is currently no means of collating or analysing the information and therefore, there is a strong risk that this valuable information is not being considered when forming policy decisions on perpetrator interventions.

McAuley Community Services for Women

Overall, there is very little detailed research on family violence perpetration. For example, there is no reliable data on the proportion of Australian men using family violence. This means there is limited understanding of who perpetrates family violence, why they do, and what works to stop them. As a result, the current intervention system is based on an incomplete understanding of the nature, scale, and scope of the problem. Consequently, it does not provide the most effective and appropriate responses to reduce and end family violence. To change this, this Inquiry must advance data mechanisms that build understanding of pathways into, and pathways out of, using violence.

No to Violence

… the third pillar of understanding the full picture is missing at the moment in terms of perpetration data. That lack of evidence restricts the ability of governments to make evidence-informed decisions … we need interventions and we need the system to work across primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery and that we need all parts of the system to work really effectively together and have the best evidence to inform that work.

Our Watch

… we cannot prevent what we do not fully understand. Thus … we must prioritise our efforts towards a cross-system approach to data collection and analysis that is designed in alignment with the MARAM framework. A contemporary evidence base would then be created that would incorporate both statistical data and the longitudinal understandings of patterns of behaviour. In doing so, collectively we could work across systems to close the gaps and disrupt the escalation of violence as well as to inform continuous improvement of primary prevention and men's response initiatives …

Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership

Well-recorded and utilised data can bring nuance to discussions regarding perpetrators and their behaviours where it is frequently absent due to a lack of information. This nuance can be crucial in understanding where early intervention is and is not effective, pathways to offending, cultural and regional approaches and challenges, and the consequences on response based on type and frequency of violence used. Knowing who perpetrators are can also challenge myths and stereotypes that exist in the community and normalise work needed to prevent further offending and violence.

Catholic Social Services Victoria

Most victims do not report to authorities, which means that police and legal data are limited sources of information for perpetration. Police data captures only a minority of cases—it tends to capture only the most severe cases—legal definitions vary across the country and existing data are shaped by various problems, not least of which is the over-policing of First Nations and ethnic minority communities. Victimisation surveys, such as the personal safety survey, give us a good idea of the extent and character of violence victimisation, but they tell us little again about who has perpetrated such violence, how and why …

… To prevent and reduce domestic and sexual violence, we need to know far more about perpetrators and perpetration. We need national data on the extent and character of people's use of domestic and sexual violence. We need a regular national representative perpetration survey …

… It is time to know much more about the extent and character of people's use of violence and the social conditions that make that more or less likely. And it is time to use that knowledge to guide efforts to prevent and reduce violence. Fundamentally the problems of domestic, family and sexual violence are problems of perpetration. Every act of violence involves a victim, yes. But every act of violence also involves a perpetrator, and it is time to increase our attention on perpetrators and perpetration. Perpetration ultimately is the problem we must solve and therefore the problem we must measure.

Professor Michael Flood, QUT Centre for Justice

4

> **By its nature a population-level survey is capturing the whole population, a representative sample of that population, so it would be inclusive of people of all genders. For example, we know that some people are less likely to report certain types of abuse, so it would help to be able to capture, as we mentioned, things like coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse, women who use violence as well, or violence in the LGBTIQ+ community.**

Our Watch

… the benefits of linked data and the resourcing of that is needed longer term. This is the future of understanding behaviours and big complex systems and looking at where interventions could best be targeted, and I think the Committee's support for linked data providing these solutions and in general the government support longer term is really critical.

Victorian Department of Health, Centre for Victorian Data Linkage

Only some of the data collected by government, health, police, courts, family violence service agencies etc is accessible to researchers, and require strict confidentiality agreements. Consent for individuals' data to be used for research would also need to be sought in alignment with privacy legislation, and processes implemented to appropriately remove identifying features.

Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand

The task for us as analysts working in this space is maximising our use of what we can see and the insights we can glean to inform interventions and policies that can assist all people experiencing family violence, regardless of whether it has become known to the social service system or criminal justice system.

Crime Statistics Agency

Evidence—whether from data analysis, research, sectoral engagement, or the expertise of survivor advocates—is critical to helping us understand what family, domestic and sexual violence looks like, what drives it, who it impacts and in what ways, and how to effectively prevent it from happening in the first place. Quality and timely evidence also supports early intervention and response services, by guiding program and service design, resourcing, and workforce development.

Respect Victoria

More broadly, data pertaining to FVIOs and homicides only offers disaggregation by sex (options male, female) with no data relating to LGBTIQA+ people. Transgender and non-binary people experience higher rates of intimate partner violence than cisgender LGBIQA+ people, and bisexual people higher rates than gay and lesbian people; the lack of data across each area within the Family Violence Dashboard makes it very difficult to access disaggregated or nuanced understandings of perpetrator violence directed toward LGBTIQA+ communities— data that can help make visible instances of LGBTIQA+ targeted violence such as transmisogyny, biphobia, heteronormativity and/or heterosexism.

Switchboard Victoria

It is time that the men who have perpetrated violence or abuse are given the opportunity to put forward their ideas about what has or is helping them to change These men are the experts on what works for them and we should be capitalising on that. Most men from the long term group stated that they wished they had done both the Men's Behaviour Change Program and the On Track Group years ago. These words need to be heard.

Margaret Chipperfield, social worker and Men's Behaviour Change Program co-facilitator

Part 4 | How to improve our understanding

Data on the prevalence of family violence perpetration is limited.[1] Most data is collected from victim survivors.[2] This data and victim survivors' stories are valuable and should be believed, supported and used—particularly where provided before service engagement or a significant event.[3] But, this data is limited in how it can inform understanding of people using family violence, for example, where victim survivors are unaware of certain information about people who use family violence, like birth, address, workplace, or previous partners.[4] The FVDB also provides valuable information on the perpetration of reported offences, but this has its limitations.[5] See Sections 4.1.2 and 4.3.1.

While research on people using family violence does not have a long history, focus in this area is growing, and it will play an important role in building a service system that includes a broad suite of 'targeted, effective, appropriate [and] available interventions' to create change and shift the burden away from victim survivors.[6] Holding people who use family violence accountable and supporting them to change their behaviour over the long term, which requires access to services, interventions and support that works, will build a better understanding of people who use family violence and help keep victim survivors safe.[7]

Building more reliable data on prevalence, why people use family violence and how to stop it, can build an intervention system based on a more complete understanding of the nature, scale, and scope of the problem. Advancing the collection of data about people who use family violence and 'understanding pathways into, and pathways out of, using violence' can help inform the development of effective and appropriate responses to reduce and end family violence.[8]

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1   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, received 30 May 2024, p. 8; Municipal Association of Victoria, *Submission 29*, received 31 May 2024, p. 1; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, received 31 May 2024, p. 2; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, received 16 August 2024, p. 15; Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, received 12 September 2024, p. 3; Professor Michael Flood, Professor, QUT Centre for Justice, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22. Nationally, some data sources hold information on people using family violence, for more detail on the federal datasets holding information about people using family violence, including ABS, Australian Institute of Criminology, AIFS and the Australian Department of Social Services, see ANROWS, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria, response to written questions on notice received 9 October 2024, p. 3.

2   Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 1. For example, ABS's Personal Safety Survey collects prevalence data on experiences of family violence and the National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey collects community attitudes data towards gender equality and gender-based violence, see ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 15; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 15; Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, received 19 July 2024, pp. 8–9.

3   Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 3.

4   Australian Muslim Women's Centre for Human Rights, *Submission 25*, received 31 May 2024, p. 4.

5   Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 16.

6   Rebecca Buys, Head of Policy and Research, No to Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52.

7   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Strong Foundations: Building on Victoria's work to end family violence*, 2023, pp. 38–39.

8   No to Violence, *Submission 61*, received 14 June 2024, p. 17.

4.1 Bring different research methodologies and data analysis together

A multi-method approach to data collection and analysis can help understand people using family violence, including those not in contact with services,[9] and in diverse relationships and with different dynamics of family violence.[10] A multi-method approach is important because while police data can provide a 'very good picture of high-harm serial offenders', data insights from other sources are needed to support a deeper understanding of people using family violence.[11] For example, a population-based survey (see Part 4, *Population based-survey*) provides an opportunity to collect data from people not currently engaged with services or 'in view' of the criminal justice system.[12]

A contemporary evidence base can be built by moving beyond systems data[13] to incorporate longitudinal and statistical understandings of patterns of behaviour,[14] and bring together qualitative and quantitative research to demonstrate different things about the same issue.[15] The Victorian Government can support research that uses the strengths of different methodologies and forms of data to 'increase the validity and reliability of data, and provide a more comprehensive understanding of domestic, family and sexual violence perpetration'.[16]

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9   Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, Chairperson, Respect Victoria Board, Respect Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39.

10   Fiona Dowsley, Chief Statistician, Crime Statistics Agency, public hearing, Melbourne, 22 July 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 1.

11   Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39. An example of a multi-method approach used in a research study is: Donna Chung et al., *Improved accountability: The role of perpetrator intervention systems*, ANROWS, Sydney, 2020. The research methods used for the project included: individual interviews with MBCP practitioners, policymakers,and participants; a survey of practitioners in the field; and an analysis of data relating to the effectiveness of protection orders. Among other things, the project provides a comprehensive analysis of integrated systems and interventions for perpetrators, and examines how the engagement and retention of perpetrators within systems can be enhanced.

12   Respect Victoria, *Improving perpetration data*, 15 August 2024, <https://www.respectvictoria.vic.gov.au/improving-perpetration-data-bringing-people-who-use-violence-into-focus> accessed 4 March 2025.

13   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 12; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, received 31 May 2024, p. 2.

14   Christine Robinson, Principal Strategic Advisor, Eastern Metropolitan Regional Family Violence Partnership, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61.

15   Dr Hayley Boxall, Research Fellow, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 25 September 2024, p. 1.

16   Our Watch, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 26 August 2024, pp. 6–7. See Appendix C for a list of Victorian and Australian Government research priorities on people using family violence.

Research methodologies will depend on the question being asked, and can include administrative data, evaluation and program data, qualitative data, studies and research projects (including longitudinal) and linked data.[17] Using data from varied sources will build a more detailed understanding of people using family violence,[18] including from:

- people using/who have used family violence (for example, through interviews and MBCPs) about what has helped or is helping them to accept responsibility and change behaviours[19]

- victim survivors and the whole family to better understand the impact, patterns and behaviours of a person using family violence[20]

- family safety advocates and practitioners working with victim survivors to build an understanding of common patterns of people using family violence[21]

- practitioners working with people who use family violence[22] (see Case Study 4.1).

These sources of data should be triangulated to monitor risk[23] (see Part 2, Section 2.4.3), understand recidivism[24] (see Part 2, Section 2.4.4) and behavioural patterns,[25] as well as the impact or effectiveness of programs[26] (see Part 1, Section 1.5.2).

17   Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 13; Ebony King, Senior Policy Advisor, Our Watch, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

18   Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, received 31 May 2024, p. 9.

19   Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, received 28 May 2024, p. 2; Meg Bagnall, Lead AOD and Family Violence, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35.

20   Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, received 17 May 2024, p. 3; Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 1.

21   No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 18; Dr Kristin Diemer, Principal Research Fellow, The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, public hearing, Melbourne, 22 July 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

22   Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24; Rebecca Buys, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

23   Tania Farha, Chief Executive Officer, Safe and Equal, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 50.

24   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 8.

25   No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 18.

26   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 2; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

4

>   **Case Study 4.1   YSAS [Youth Support and Advocacy Service]
> —Use of practitioner expertise**
>
> 'In 2018, YSAS began a program of work to develop deeper understanding about
> the complexities, support needs and challenges experienced by young people with
> co-occurring substance use and family violence experiences. Funded by [FSV], this
> initial work involved qualitative interviews with 130+ Youth and Youth AOD Workers
> across Victoria combined with a literature review and a State and National Policy
> Analysis to understand complexities of family violence on the lives of young people with
> co-occurring youth substance use experiences. Findings from this work identified that
> a significant number of young people accessing Youth AOD services have past and/or
> current family and intimate partner violence experiences, and that these experiences
> directly impact young people's AOD treatment and support.
>
> The YSAS Family Violence program of work has included mapping the knowledge,
> skills and resources required by Youth AOD Practitioners and Youth AOD services
> necessary to provide effective, capable and developmentally sensitive support to young
> people with co-occurring substance use and family violence experiences. It has led to
> the development of training curriculum and resources which have been piloted and
> successfully evaluated and are currently being embedded into the practice approaches
> used by Youth AOD Workers at YSAS.'
>
> Source: YSAS, *Submission 9*, received 28 May 2024, p. 3.

4.1.1   Administrative data

Capture of administrative data on family violence and people using family violence
during the provision of services in Victoria is 'significant'.[27] Administrative data, such as
contact details and demographic information, is collected as a by-product of business
needs to provide services.[28] Part 1, Section 1.1 discusses a mapping project to identify
what questions can be answered through this existing data. Analysis of administrative
data can help build the evidence base and understanding of the profile and volume of
people who use family violence,[29] including by:

- identifying required improvements to data collection that would enable better
  analysis and inform discussion on what qualitative data is needed[30]

- understanding how victim survivors and people using family violence engage with
  services[31]

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27   Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 1–2.

28   Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, pp. 5, 10; Victorian Government, *Data collection challenges and
      improvements*, 19 October 2020, <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-family-violence-data-collection-framework/data-
      collection-challenges-and-improvements> accessed 8 April 2024.

29   McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, received 31 May 2024, pp. 5–6; Good Shepherd Australia New
      Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 19; Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, received 14 June 2024, p. 1.

30   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 2, 4.

31   Ibid., p. 4.

- analysing themes and risk levels about harm and perpetrator profiles[32]

- evaluating, informing, developing and improving systems and policy[33]

- developing and measuring targeted, effective and appropriate initiatives for prevention, intervention, harm minimisation and rehabilitation.[34]

This utility of this administrative data is predicated on the quality and consistency of data collection (see Part 2, Section 2.1) and should be accompanied by qualitative data analysis[35] (see Section 4.1.2). Using administrative data to highlight trends and inform policy and planning may encourage practitioners to prioritise and collect more rich data for analysis,[36] and improvements can ensure it is collected in a manner more easily used for research.[37] Linked administrative data, such as through the use of unique identifiers (see Section 4.1.5) can also be used to provide a more comprehensive view by combining information from different sources.

Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to make better use of administrative data include using:

- risk assessment data, including where it is qualitative,[38] held in case notes,[39] collected during group work[40] and collected by victim survivor service providers[41]

- L17 and service data to understand pathways, behavioural patterns and client journeys through systems[42]

- demographic information on people who use family violence and their interactions with accountability systems[43]

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32   McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, pp. 5–6.

33   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 4; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 19.

34   McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, pp. 5–6; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 19; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 18; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, received 23 June 2024, p. 36.

35   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 4.

36   Dr Jozica Kutin, General Manager, Advocacy and Service Impact, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 65; Livia La Rocca, General Manager Intergrated Place-Based Services, Vic East and NSW, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 65; Tom Bowerman, Acting Executive Director, Services, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 58.

37   Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 14. An example of a project that used administrative data is: Bett Luu at al., *Analysis of linked longitudinal administrative data on child protection involvement for NSW families with domestic and family violence, alcohol and other drug issues and mental health issues*, ANROWS, 2024. This project generated new evidence about the prevalence of co-occurring issues and the interlinking nature of these issues for families with child protection involvement. It produced prevalence rates of multiple risk factors, time trends, geographic clusters in New South Wales, and the predictive power of multiple risk factors for children's entry into out-of-home care.

38   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, received 31 May 2024, p. 22.

39   Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, p. 1; Rasha Abbas, Chief Executive Officer, inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46; Rebecca Buys, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 56.

40   Rebecca Buys, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 56.

41   McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, pp. 5–6; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 19.

42   No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 18.

43   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 3.

- artificial intelligence and other technology to identify patterns and trends in administrative and case note data[44] (see Part 2, Sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3)

- data from calls to the Men's Referral Service, which are recorded and have research consent attached[45]

- data on mental illness and family violence held by courts and prisons.[46]

MARAM evidence-based risk factors are designed with categorical data fields ('yes', 'no' or 'unknown') for easier analysis.[47] Past analysis of data 'deeply embedded in risk assessment tools' and case files demonstrates 'this information offers important insights into' people using family violence.[48] MARAM data can provide a comprehensive history of family violence use, informed by victim survivors and details gathered by agencies.[49] Profile data generated by services working with people who use family violence can be used to better understand risk and provide practice insight for policy and research. For example, data from nuanced behaviour change treatment for people who use family violence with cognitive impairments could provide particular insights to inform policy and research.[50] Improving data extraction functionality will maximise opportunities to use this data.[51]

4.1.2 Qualitative data

Qualitative data analysis is central to building a more nuanced and contextual understanding of family violence and people who use family violence by:[52]

- 'making sense of data and drawing meaningful and accurate insights'[53]

- contextualising volume data impacted by rates of misidentification[54]

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44 Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46.

45 Rebecca Buys, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 56.

46 Associate Professor Andrew Carroll, Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, Fellow of RANZCP, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 44; Dr Jacqueline Rakov, Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist, Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 45.

47 Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 58.

48 Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, p. 1. For the specific research, see Marie Segrave, *Temporary migration and family violence: An analysis of victimisation, vulnerability and support*, School of Social Sciences, Monash University, Melbourne, 2017; Marie Segrave and Naomi Pfitzner, *Family violence and temporary visa holders during COVID-19*, Monash University, 2020.

49 Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59.

50 Meli, *Submission 7*, received 27 May 2024, p. 4.

51 Marie Segrave, Stefani Vasil and Shih Joo Tan, *Submission 56*, p. 1.

52 ANROWS, *Submission 15*, received 30 May 2024, p. 5; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, received 31 May 2024, p. 4; Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, received 14 June 2024, p. 10; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 4, 7; Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24; Patrick Cook, Head of Policy, Communications and Strategy, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12; Jessica Seamer, PhD Candidate, Monash Gender and Family Violence Prevention Centre, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39; Our Watch, response to questions on notice, p. 6.

53 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 7; Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

54 ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 6.

- providing a better picture when used with quantitative methodology[55]

- identifying patterns rather than incidents of family violence[56]

- better understanding the 'how', 'why' and 'root causes' of perpetration, how family violence changes over time and effective interventions for different cohorts.[57]

Current consolidated public data on family violence, like the FVDB, is incident-based and quantitative. This limits its ability to accurately represent the complexity of family violence and people using family violence. Qualitative data must be considered alongside quantitative data as part of a 'systematic, nuanced and planned approach to collecting and collating de-identified data that could assist in evidence-based public policy to prevent and eliminate family violence in [the] community'.[58] Women's Health Grampians suggested that a project to link or map qualitative data holdings could provide various insights into people using family violence. For example, understanding into why and when people using family violence contact the justice system, service availability, health and social factors and attitudes.[59] This links to Part 1, Recommendation 1.

Qualitative data should be systematically collected and used in service delivery,[60] but obtaining this data requires sufficient resourcing, time and expertise. Additional resourcing can help services holding data on family violence perpetration, for example MBCPs, to conduct in-depth case reviews to collect and update data systems with this qualitative information. Services can be supported to extract and examine the qualitative data they already capture, for example through case notes.[61] See Part 2, Section 2.3.2.

4.1.3   Evaluation and monitoring data

Programs and interventions for family violence are provided by government, community and third-party organisations. To help ensure success, the Victorian Government's 'considerable investment' in programs and interventions for family violence must be accompanied by robust research, evaluation and monitoring.[62] FSV noted that the evaluation and monitoring for new and existing programs and interventions:

- supports 'continuous improvement of perpetrator interventions'

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55   Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 3; Dr Hayley Boxall, Research Fellow, ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 31–32.

56   Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 4; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3.

57   Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 10; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 22.

58   Elia Pourasgheri, Director, Family, Youth and Children's Law, Victoria Legal Aid, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4; Rachael Pliner, Director of Policy and Advocacy, Federation of Community Legal Centres, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5.

59   Mika Pediaditis, Research and Evaluation Advisor, Women's Health Grampians, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39.

60   Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 10.

61   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 8.

62   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 3.

- builds 'understanding of persons using family violence and the demand drivers within the family violence service system'

- builds understanding of 'outcomes of initiatives for people using family violence and their family members across communities, ages, and relationship types, including for Aboriginal people, people from culturally, linguistically and faith diverse backgrounds, LGBTIQA+ people, older people and people with disability'

- 'use feedback from the family violence service sector and lived experience to support and inform research and evaluation findings'.[63]

Rigorous evaluations of programs and systems generate accurate data on the profile and volume of people who use family violence to increase understanding and enable quality and actionable insights about the effectiveness of services. For example, it can help understand what works and what does not, including who programs do and do not reach and what they achieve, or whether alternative ways exist to manage behaviour.[64] Evaluations of perpetrator programs (see Part 3, *Learning what works: programs for people using family violence*) and several evaluations and research studies on people who use family violence,[65] in particular projects supported by ANROWS[66] (see Appendix C) also assist. However, program-level evaluation remains a critical gap in current research.[67] Evaluating findings about family violence incidents, experiences, responses, impacts and outcomes is key in shaping effective policies and improving systems.[68]

Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to improve evaluation and monitoring data included:

- Improve evaluation data and frameworks to adequately capture experiences and impacts of services on people who use family violence,[69] and invest in ongoing monitoring and evaluation on family violence perpetration and drivers.[70]

- Evaluate and develop community-led interventions and programs (which are usually more culturally appropriate and trusted by communities) to better understand family violence perpetration.[71]

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63   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, received 17 July 2024, p. 6.

64   Caroline Counsel, Co-Chair of the Family Violence Working Group, Law Institute of Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, received 14 June 2024, p. 8; Amanda Alford, Director of Government Relations, Policy and Evidence, Our Watch, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25; Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24; Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, received 14 June 2024, p. 7.

65   Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 1.

66   Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 9; Ray Griggs, Secretary, Australian Department of Social Services, correspondence, 12 June 2024, p. 2; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 3.

67   Dr Amy Webster, Policy, Advocacy and Research Manager, Sexual Assault Services Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 3–4.

68   Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

69   Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 10.

70   Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 6.

71   No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 19.

- Improve longitudinal data post-program and long-term tracking of people who use family violence to help measure effectiveness of service interventions over time,[72] understand desistance and identify additional intervention points and support needs to maintain desistance.[73] See *Population-based survey* below.

- Implement a minimum dataset (see Part 2, Section 2.1.1) that includes data points that measure and monitor the nature and extent of family violence across multiple systems.[74] This would also improve data linkage and the FVDB.[75]

- Use data linkage to identify patterns[76] and use data from interactions with the criminal justice system, including charges, arrest rates and legal proceeding outcomes, to provide insight into intervention effectiveness and opportunities for additional prevention or rehabilitation programs.[77] See Section 4.1.5.

4.1.4 Studies and research projects

In May 2024, the Victorian Government announced a perpetrator study 'to explore the latest evidence on the behaviours and drivers of men who use family violence to improve initiatives to prevent this violence [and] ensure Victoria's suite of programs and interventions is contemporary, effective and accessible to perpetrators from a range of backgrounds and experiences'.[78] FSV is in the 'early stages of scoping' for this two-year study 'to make sure that it complements work underway and addresses some of the gaps in our knowledge and informs future improvement to services'.[79] FSV advised the study is 'of quite a significant scale' and is FSV's current focus, but it may seek future funding for research.[80]

As discussed in Part 2, Section 2.2, the 2024–25 Budget allocated $167.5 million over five years for family violence initiatives across four departments linked to the EIIF. This includes a specific allocation of $41.1 million over five years[81] that allows for the continued delivery of 'perpetrator case management with individualised and timely interventions', including for diverse cohorts, and funding 'for the continued support for research to inform evidence-based policy and program development for the prevention of family violence'.[82]

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72   Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 11; Sameera Fieldgrass, Practice Lader, Sector and Community Partnerships, Centre for Multicultural Youth, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48; Tom Bowerman, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 56; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 5; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 8; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, received 31 May 2024, p. 6.

73   Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 5.

74   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 3.

75   Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23.

76   Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 5.

77   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 15.

78   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing*, Submission 68*, p. 8.

79   Amber Griffiths, Executive Director, Family and Sexual Violence Programs, Family Safety Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59.

80   Ibid., p. 60.

81   Department of Treasury and Finance, *Budget Paper No. 3: Service Delivery*, 2024/25, pp. 36, 39, 208–209.

82   Ibid.

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To build a fuller understanding about people who use family violence and grow the evidence base on people who use family violence, Inquiry stakeholders suggested the Victorian Government fund new studies and research projects, augment existing studies or support research institutes.[83] Studies can identify risk factors and patterns of perpetration to inform approaches and strategies relevant to prevention, early intervention and response efforts.[84] Inquiry stakeholders suggested research and studies into:

- sexual violence[85] (see Part 3, Section 3.3.1)

- people who use family violence not in contact with services[86] (this will help challenge skewed representations of perpetration, see Part 1, Section 1.2)

- how people interact with systems to inform service planning and delivery[87]

- the needs, risk and protective factors, drivers and responses for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds using or at risk of using family violence[88]

- co-perpetration and the understanding that people who use 'one form of violence are likely to also perpetrate other forms, across a range of contexts, against more than one person and at different points throughout their life'[89]

- motivators to differentiate women's and men's use of family violence[90]

- clinical and non-clinical hospital staff observations about the indicators of family violence perpetration.[91]

Studies, research and data collection should adapt methodology to reflect complexities and nuances of family violence in different contexts,[92] and use more:

- research that centres practice-based knowledge[93]

- qualitative and mixed-method approaches[94]

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83 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 5; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, received 14 June 2024, p. 3; Matt Tyler, Executive Director, Community and Systems Impact, Jesuit Social Services, pubic hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12; Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 6; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, pp. 6, 14; Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 45*, received 31 May 2024, p. 9.

84 Our Watch, response to questions on notice, p. 4. See Appendix C for a list of Victorian and Australian Government research priorities on people using family violence.

85 Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, received 31 May 2024, pp. 3, 7, 8; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3.

86 No to Violence, *Submission 61*, pp. 5, 18; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 13.

87 Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 3; Rachael Pliner, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6.

88 Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 9.

89 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 13; Michael Flood et al., *Who uses domestic, family, and sexual violence, how, and why?: The state of knowledge report on violence perpetration*, Queensland University of Technology, Queensland, 2022, p. 46.

90 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 16.

91 Susan George, *Submission 55*, received 14 June 2024, p. 3.

92 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 12.

93 Phillip Ripper, Chief Executive Officer, No to Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 47.

94 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 9; Our Watch, response to questions on notice, p. 6.

- rigorous study designs, 'such as person-centred designs examining different types of perpetrators, and social network analysis of how perpetration clusters within networks'.[95]

Growing the body of research that looks at the attitudes and behaviours of people using family violence is important to supplement data collection and build the evidence base to address gaps in, and improve, our understanding. Undertaken by Jesuit Social Services in partnership with Respect Victoria, the Man Box 2024 study is an example of how additional data can be collected on perpetration and behaviours to help address family violence. The study surveyed 3,500 Australian men aged 18 to 30 and explored how they perceived messages about what it means to be a 'real man' and how these attitudes link to outcomes and use of family violence.[96]

Longitudinal studies

Longitudinal data collects information from the same cohort of people at varying intervals over time.[97] Inquiry stakeholders suggested promoting perpetration studies that use longitudinal methodology to:

- understand people using or at risk of using family violence and their drivers, attitudes, background and contexts, pathways in and out of perpetration (why people stop using family violence and the contributing factors), risk and protective factors, long-term impacts of interventions, life courses and transitions (for example, the impacts of a first serious relationship or parenthood on behaviour and perpetration), and change over time to support prevention and response efforts[98] (for example, by identifying early markers leading to the onset of violent behaviours, and persistence of, or pathways out of, these behaviours)[99]

- capture data on people involved in the criminal justice system, but also people in the general community that are at a higher risk of perpetrating family violence but do not go on to perpetrate family violence to better understand resilience and protective factors[100]

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95 Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 9.

96 Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12; Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 9. The Man Box 2024 study is used for many reasons, including to raise awareness of the 'harmful stereotypes about what it means to be a man' and to promote alternatives before the point of crisis. See Respect Victoria, *Annual report 2023–24*, 2024, pp. 10, 21. The Man Box 2024 report also makes recommendations to the Australian and state and territory governments in four areas: policy change; workforce capacity building; community awareness raising; and future research. See The Men's Project, A Jesuit Social Services Initiative, *The Man Box 2024: Re-examining what it means to be a man in Australia*, Jesuit Social Services, Melbourne, 2024, pp. 14–16.

97 Dr Hayley Boxall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

98 Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, p. 3; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 8; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 9; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, received 5 June 2024, p. 9; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 22; Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, received 26 July 2024, p. 5; Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 9; National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, received 30 May 2024, p. 3; Dr Hayley Boxall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

99 Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, p. 6.

100 Dr Hayley Boxall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31.

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- provide insight into causation, including what contributes to the onset and escalation of family violence—moving beyond cross-sector datasets that, while an important element of research, provide data more on perpetrator characteristics.[101]

A population-based longitudinal study following birth cohorts (a group of the population born during a specific period) over the life course would help understand trajectories, including how childhood experiences of family violence affect life courses, or what increases or reduces risk of adverse life outcomes such as using family violence. Similar criminological life course research studies have been done for other kinds of offending.[102] For example, preventing the onset of youth offending.[103] There are some limitations and risks for longitudinal data use in studies, which should be considered and mitigated when designing methodology. These include respondent attrition (for example, because the content may be too confronting), participant and partner safety, and sample size.[104]

4.1.5   Linked data

Victorian Government agencies and departments, and service providers, hold considerable data on individuals.[105] Improving de-identified data linkage can help to:

- build a more complete understanding of family violence and people who use family violence,[106] including by identifying patterns, trends, profiles, drivers and reinforcing factors,[107] and building understanding of systems abuse[108]

- understand victim survivor, people using family violence and whole-family client journeys, service system pathways and help-seeking behaviours[109]

- provide a broader view of people using family violence's presentations and service use[110] and monitor access to services across systems[111]

- measure change and capture data over time through longitudinal analysis[112]

- develop understanding without creating further reporting mechanisms[113]

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101 Ibid., p. 24; National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, p. 3.

102 Dr Silke Meyer, Professor of Social Work, Griffith University, public hearing, Melbourne, 29 August 2024, *additional information*, pp. 5–6.

103 Ross Homel et al., 'Preventing the onset of youth offending: The impact of the Pathways to Prevention Project on child behaviour and wellbeing', *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice*, no. 481, 2015, pp. 1–10.

104 Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, p. 6.

105 Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 10.

106 Ibid.; ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 6; Amanda Alford, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

107 Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 5; ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 6; Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 55; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 10; Rachael Pliner, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17.

108 Rachael Pliner, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17.

109 The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 3; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 4; Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 55; Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 38.

110 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 13.

111 Safe and Equal, *Submission 58*, p. 7; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 4; Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

112 Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 4.

113 Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 10.

- inform service design,[114] monitor program effectiveness[115] and identify opportunities for early intervention.[116]

For example, a 2022 ANROWS-funded study used data linkage to generate new insights into the effects of family violence on children's mental health. It linked data through 'a population-based cohort study using de-identified linked administrative data (police and health records) of children born in Western Australia between 1987 and 2010'.[117]

AIFS identified that other fields link government administrative data to nationwide surveys more frequently than is done for family violence research. 'Recent technological advancements' mean this is an opportunity for family violence research, 'if met with a commitment by federal and state governments to optimise these important holdings'.[118] AIFS identified that linking federal and state data sources on detailed demographic information, intervention and support services, health services, criminal history, along with population survey data on attitudes and values, can help build understanding of:

- how family violence is changing, including how technology drives new and emerging forms of family and sexual violence

- use of family violence and motivators for behaviour

- use of services to design public health and system interventions, prevention efforts and service responses.[119]

Linked data in Victoria is primarily provided through the Victorian Social Investment Integrated Data Resource (VSIIDR)—'a multi-agency linked data resource about Victorian residents and those accessing Victorian services'. VSIIDR is 'used for research and analysis in the public interest, including designing prevention initiatives, and providing a foundation for the formulation of public policy' and is not used for identifying individuals.[120] On a monthly basis, it links around 30 Victorian datasets and is available to researchers and government (through different processes) on request through a cost recovery basis.[121]

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114   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 4; Max Broadley, Independent Chair, Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 34.

115   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 10.

116   The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 4.

117   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 5. See Carol Orr et al., *Investigating the mental health of children exposed to domestic and family violence through the use of linked police and health records*, ANROWS, 2022.

118   Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, p. 4.

119   Ibid., pp. 4–5. For further discussion of access to federal and interstate data, see Part 2, Section 2.6.

120   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 12; Dr Lance Emerson, Deputy Secretary, eHealth, Department of Health, Centre for Victorian Data Linkage, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 1, 3. The Department of Government Services is responsible for governance and CVDL is responsible for providing the linked data. CVDL's core business is 'creating and updating linked data assets and responding to requests for access to linked data for research and analytics purposes'. For more information on the datasets included, the linkage processes, including security, access requirements and the cost to request data (an average of $10,000 to $20,000). See Dr Lance Emerson, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 1–5.

121   Dr Lance Emerson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 1.

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The Centre for Victorian Data Linkage (CVDL), established in 2009, creates and updates linked data assets and responds to access requests for research and analysis. CVDL conducts around 120 data linkage projects a year, including to evaluate program effectiveness, inform service design and needs of different groups, and to understand service pathways.[122] CVDL has received four requests for linkage projects on perpetrators of family violence: one on MBCP outcomes, one for the FVOF, and two for external research projects.[123] CVDL advised that '[t]here is nothing stopping service providers applying [for linked data]' but that CVDL 'charge a market-comparable rate for linkage services'. CVDL informed the Committee that 'no request from service providers for [that] linked data' in relation to perpetrators of family violence have been received.[124] The timeframes for CVDL to provide research data vary depending on what the project relates to.[125]

CVDL offers 'extensive opportunities for research around family violence and its intersections with health, including AOD, mental health and [emergency department] service settings, child protection, [and] housing'.[126] The value of linked data and number of requests for linked data for family violence perpetration is expected to grow as more family violence data is added to the VSIIDR, with TOD data recently included and TRAM data to soon be included.[127] This will support more research and understanding of program outcomes[128] and 'will provide a significantly more comprehensive picture to help us understand the characteristics of adults using family violence'.[129] Some barriers to adding more sources to the VSIIDR are willingness of data custodians to share data (although this has increased over time), low data quality or weak identifiers, and the time it takes for data to be made ready.[130]

Linking data to improve visibility of client journeys in the service system is a focus of *Strong Foundations*.[131] CVDL and DFFH identified the VSIIDR could be improved to support evaluation and research projects by:

- being updated more regularly[132]

- improving awareness of how linked data can answer complex questions[133]

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122   Ibid., pp. 1, 3.

123   Ibid., p. 4. For a description of these projects, see Centre for Victorian Data Linkage, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 9 September 2024, pp. 2–3.

124   Dr Lance Emerson, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 5–6.

125   Centre for Victorian Data Linkage, response to questions on notice, p. 3.

126   Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information*, p. 4.

127   Jane Hingston, Director, Perpetrator Programs and System Performance, Family Safety Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 73; Centre for Victorian Data Linkage, response to questions on notice, p. 1.

128   Jane Hingston, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 73.

129   Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59.

130   Dr Lance Emerson, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 3, 4.

131   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 14.

132   Dr Lance Emerson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 7.

133   Ibid., p. 8.

- increasing clarity about the key questions to be answered, for example, on pathways or predictors, to help identify the kinds of data to include in the linked dataset[134]

- improving the availability and use of linked data that includes 'perpetrator presentations and service usage'[135] and 'perpetrator risk factor data' to increase visibility of people who use family violence's presentations and risk across the system—the upcoming inclusion of TRAM data may serve as a test case to include 'other data sources, such as Victoria Police and Child Protection risk factor data'.[136]

Inquiry stakeholders' suggestions to increase use of linked data included:

- Increase linkage of data between and across jurisdictions, such as the federal Person Level Integrated Data Asset and CVDL,[137] and legal, justice, AOD and health data at a state and federal level,[138] and better link data across different systems and sectors (including federally) to understand systems abuse.[139] See Part 2, Section 2.6.

- Introduce confidential and anonymised data linkage to track a person using family violence's system journey,[140] through unique identifiers[141] and statistical linkage keys.[142]

- Use data linkage more regularly to evaluate program efficacy and measure outcomes.[143]

- Link existing data from Victoria Police, Courts, Corrections, RAMPs, CIP and service providers' contract/funding reporting,[144] which could be enabled by more standardised data collection practices and unique identifiers.[145]

- Use machine learning and artificial intelligence to analyse linked data to understand trends and patterns.[146] See Part 2, Sections 2.3.2 and 2.3.3. This could include establishing purpose-built algorithms for departments that hold data from activity reports and increasing departments' capacity to use this data for research and evaluations.[147]

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134 Ibid., pp. 8–9.

135 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 13.

136 Ibid.

137 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 8; Bianca Brijnath, Director Social Gerontology, National Ageing Research Institute, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

138 Rachael Pliner, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17.

139 Ibid.

140 The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 3.

141 Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, pp. 6, 9.

142 Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 65.

143 Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

144 Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9.

145 Ibid., p. 6.

146 Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 24.

147 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 1.

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Data linkage should be considered with caution, noting:

- MCV raised concerns about linking its data to other sources data due to 'privacy, safety and public interest implications'[148]

- data linkage may exacerbate the harms of certain data collection practices[149]

- some datasets may require investment to ensure they are of sufficient quality before being linked or folded into public datasets[150]

- while linked datasets provide detailed information, the data that is 'not there' is equally important—for example, datasets with a First Nations indicator could be analysed in a simplistic way, not contextualising the data through the lens of colonisation, racism and intergenerational trauma, and leading to reductive, blaming and negative statistics.[151]

Superficial and simplistic interpretation of data causes harm and does not progress efforts to prevent family violence. Data must not be linked 'for data linkage sake' but used to 'meaningfully and intentionally ... answer the most pressing questions being asked across the service system'.[152] See Part 1, Section 1.2 for discussion on contextualising and recognising limitations when data is collected, shared, linked, used and analysed.

FINDING 65: A contemporary and deeper evidence base on people using family violence and perpetration can be built through a multi-method approach to data collection, research and analysis. This includes administrative data, evaluation and monitoring data, qualitative data, longitudinal data, studies and research projects and linked data, from a variety of sources, including people using/who have used family violence, victim survivors, families and practitioners working with people who use family violence and victim survivors.

RECOMMENDATION 48: The Victorian Government support the capture, extraction and use of administrative and qualitative data collected during service provision for research and analysis (including Men's Referral Service phoneline data, and Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework and case file data), to inform evidence-based policy, a fuller picture of people using family violence, profiles and risk, and measuring the effectiveness of interventions.

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148 Magistrates' Court of Victoria, *Submission 50*, received 31 May 2024, p. 1. MCV did not respond to the Committee's written question on notice about addressing these concerns. See the Committee's written questions on notice to MCV and MCV's response on the Committee's website: Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee, *Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria: Submissions*, n.d., <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/inquiry-into-capturing-data-on-family-violence-perpetrators-in-victoria/submissions> accessed 20 December 2024.

149 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 5.

150 Patrick Cook, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 9.

151 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 6.

152 Ibid.

RECOMMENDATION 49: The Victorian Government invest in, and support:

- data collection and program evaluation to adequately capture experiences and impacts of services on people using family violence

- the use of this data to inform research and provide insight into family violence incidents, experiences, drivers, responses, impacts and outcomes to shape effective policies and improve systems.

RECOMMENDATION 50: The Victorian Government support new studies and research projects into people who use family violence, which centres practice-based knowledge and qualitative, longitudinal and multi-method approaches. Priority should particularly be given to people who use family violence who are not in contact with services.

RECOMMENDATION 51: The Victorian Government undertake a longitudinal research study to track people from different backgrounds and with varying levels of system contact to build a better understanding of family violence trajectories, protective factors, behaviour change over time, pathways in and out of perpetration, long-term impacts of behaviour interventions, attitudes, offending contexts and what increases or reduces risks of adverse outcomes.

RECOMMENDATION 52: The Victorian Government promote and improve availability of linked family violence data in the Victorian Social Investment Integrated Data Resource for external research access, and once both The Orange Door and Tools for Risk Assessment and Management datasets are included, undertake a data linkage project to:

- better understand the journeys of people using family violence, including their systems interactions, and health and social intersections

- evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of interventions and programs.

> **By its nature a population-level survey is capturing the whole population, a representative sample of that population, so it would be inclusive of people of all genders. For example, we know that some people are less likely to report certain types of abuse, so it would help to be able to capture … things like coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse, women who use violence as well, or violence in the LGBTIQ[A]+ community.**

Our Watch[a]

Data collected by international[b] and national population-based surveys tend to focus on victim survivor perspectives and provide limited data about people who use family violence and why they use it.[c] In Australia, the ABS Personal Safety Survey provides valuable prevalence estimates from victim survivors' perspective, but it provides limited detail about people who use violence.[d]

To help address this data limitation, a pilot population-based survey of people who use violence is progressing in New South Wales.[e] FSV is following this pilot and indicated its in principle support for developing a Victorian perpetration survey.[f] Several Inquiry stakeholders support a population-based survey of people who use violence[g]—either through advocacy at a federal level for a national survey[h] or by developing a state-level survey.[i]
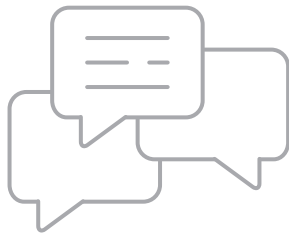
Benefits of a population-based survey

Inquiry stakeholders identified that a population-based survey could:
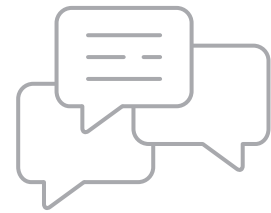
- provide a more representative sample of people who use family violence, given there are many people who use family violence that do not come into contact with the justice system or family violence services, limiting existing datasets[j] (see Part 1, Section 1.2)

- increase understanding of, and provide data to encourage more research on, the profile, volume, drivers and pathways of people who use family violence[k]

- measure the effectiveness of early intervention and prevention measures for family violence, inform evidence-based policy decisions and interventions regarding family violence, and help evaluate the progress of those policies[l]

- shift the priority of developing knowledge and understanding of family violence towards people who use family violence and away from victim survivors, who may be re-traumatised by recounting their experiences[m]

- provide data to increase public awareness and education of family violence.[n]

a Ebony King, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 16. **b** An international example is the *United Nations multi-country study on men and violence in Asia and the Pacific*. It sought to understand the types of violence used against women, men's experience of violence, identify factors associated with male violence against women and promote evidence-based policies and programmes to prevent violence against women. However, the samples drawn from nine sites across six countries were not nationally representative. ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 15; United Nations Development Programme, *Why do some men use violence against women and how can we prevent it?*, 10 September 2024, <https://www.undp.org/asia-pacific/publications/why-do-some-men-use-violence-against-women-and-how-can-we-prevent-it> accessed 13 January 2025. **c** Crime Statistics Agency, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 5 August 2024, pp. 2–3. **d** ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 14. The Jesuit Social Services Man Box national survey on attitudes to manhood and behaviours of Australian men aged 18–45 and the Australian National Community Attitudes towards Violence Against Women Survey are examples of other national population-based surveys. ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 4; Crime Statistics Agency, response to questions on notice, p. 2. **e** The state-level pilot is funded by ANROWS and run by the University of New South Wales, the Queensland University of Technology, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand and the Equality Institute. It commenced in June 2024 and will run for two years. It intends to survey 2,000 people on their use of family violence. ANROWS, *Measuring domestic, family and sexual violence perpetration in Australia*, <https://www.anrows.org.au/project/measuring-domestic-family-and-sexual-violence-perpetration-in-australia> accessed 13 January 2025; Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60. **f** Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 61. **g** Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 9; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 4; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 2; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, pp. 7–8; Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 5; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 13–14; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 20–21; One in Three Campaign, *Submission 60*, received 14 June 2024, pp. 23–24; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, pp. 18–19; Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information*, p. 7; Professor Michael Flood, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23. **h** Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 35–37; Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 13. **i** Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 4; Flood et al., *Who uses domestic, family, and sexual violence, how, and why?*, p. 27; Dr Hayley Boxall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27. **j** Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 16; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 14. **k** Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 9; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 4; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 2; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 20; Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 13; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 14. **l** Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 9; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 20; Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 10. **m** Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 17; Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 10. **n** Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 20.

Challenges and risks of a population-based survey

Inquiry stakeholders identified that a population-based survey could:

- raise safety, logistical, study design and privacy issues when collecting data from multiple people in a single household[a]

- risk people not honestly disclosing family violence behaviours, particularly if the survey is not anonymous,[b] which impacts data reliability[c]

- require significant time, money and staff resourcing to effectively design the survey and evaluate the survey data,[d] in turn, potentially diverting funding from other research or services that may add more value[e]

- risk duplicating data collection that will be collected because of recent developments of a range of perpetrator risk assessment tools[f]

- risk stigmatising subgroups, which could be impacted by biases and decisions on what data is captured and not captured [g] (demonstrating the importance of contextualising the data, see Part 1, Section 1.2)

- be impacted by survey companies' reluctance to engage with the survey design, roll out and evaluation, for example, due to ambiguity around mandatory reporting requirements.[h]

Methodological considerations of a population-based survey

Inquiry stakeholders acknowledged that no single dataset can provide a complete picture of people who use family violence and that there would be challenges in developing a useful and reliable survey methodology.[i] However, these challenges are not insurmountable with a flexible, thoughtful and trial-based approach.[j] Inquiry stakeholders suggested that a survey should:

- focus on identifying drivers and patterns of behaviour among people who use violence and not on the identity of individuals[k]

- collect longitudinal and cross-sectional data from enough participants to provide a large, measurable and representative sample size to enable national, state and regional-level analysis to understand the different context, behaviours and risk factors at those levels[l]

- consider how to reach people with limited access to technology[m]

- collect data on people using family violence's demographics, forms of family violence used, psychosocial factors (such as mental health disorders), motivations for using family violence, as well as demographic information about victim survivors[n]

- include nuanced and thoughtfully designed questions to increase honest responses from participants,[o] developed in consultation with victim survivors, First Nations people, family violence and other relevant sectors to ensure questions are sensitive and intersectional[p]

- ensure survey participation is confidential and without legal consequences to encourage people to report family violence behaviours honestly.[q]

a Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, p. 6. **b** Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 45*, p. 7. **c** Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5; Crime Statistics Agency, response to questions on notice, pp. 2–3; Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, p. 6. **d** ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 14. **e** Kathleen Maltzahn, Chief Executive Officer, Sexual Assault Services Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3. **f** Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 56. **g** ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 13–14. **h** Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 45*, p. 8. **i** For example, quantitative self-reporting data limits the opportunity for contextualisation and follow-up research with participants compared to qualitative data collection. Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 4; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, pp. 13, 14; Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 13; Crime Statistics Agency, response to questions on notice, pp. 2–3. **j** ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 16. **k** Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 13. **l** Ibid., p. 12; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 14. **m** Dr Hayley Boxall, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26. **n** Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, pp. 7–8. **o** Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 16; Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 20–21; Flood et al., *Who uses domestic, family, and sexual violence, how, and why?*, p. 74. **p** Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, p. 5; Lisa Robinson, Director, Family Safety and Therapeutic Services, Meli, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22. **q** Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 9–10; Professor Michael Flood, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25.

FINDING 66: A population-based survey of people who use family violence is an opportunity to collect data and provide evidence to improve understanding of the profile, drivers, behaviours and pathways of people who use family violence. This could help inform evidence-based policies to prevent, mitigate and respond to family violence. Question design and participant anonymity are important to consider when conducting this type of survey.

RECOMMENDATION 53: The Victorian Government advocate at a federal level for a national population-based survey of people who use family violence that provides for state and regional-level data to shape evidence-based policies on preventing and responding to family violence at these different levels.

RECOMMENDATION 54: In the absence of a national population-based survey, the Victorian Government pilot a state-level population-based survey aimed at people who use violence. This should incorporate learnings from the New South Wales pilot survey about what methodology would yield the most reliable and measurable data.

4.2 Increase capacity to do research and understand data

Administrative data is more accessible and easily understood than complex data, including longitudinal and linked data. As this data requires greater skill to use, it is less likely to be used to its fullest potential.[153] Researchers and service providers can be supported to make better use of existing data and research. For example, AIFS noted its current and planned data holdings 'collect valuable information' on people who use family violence, including longitudinal studies and Victoria-specific data, which 'have the potential to further inform understandings about the common risk factors for people [who] use or are at risk of using violence'.[154]

De-identified data about people who use family violence must be critically analysed and considered in context to avoid the limitations identified in Part 1, Section 1.2.[155] Administrative data is not often collected for the purpose of research, so interpretation must consider nuance, contexts and limitations of data, and avoid imposing findings or particular analytical frameworks that manipulate data beyond its limits.[156] Good research considers how to add context and framing to data so it can be meaningfully used to create change.[157]

The Victorian Government provides guidance on embedding lived experience into research, but this is limited to 'people who have experienced family violence and/ or sexual violence', 'people with an experience of seeking support from the family violence and/or sexual assault system as a victim survivor' and 'the families carers of people directly impacted by family violence via the aforementioned experiences'.[158] The Victorian Government could provide greater guidance to researchers and service providers that accompanies the release of any datasets,[159] to ensure data is analysed and interpreted with nuance[160] and thought about critically when informing policy and practice.[161] For example, implementing Indigenous Data Sovereignty provides First Nations communities with ownership of data to ensure it is collected and analysed with a First Nations lens, and that public narratives using this data match on-the-ground realities. This 'strengthens the ability to have solutions that meet the needs' of First Nations communities.[162] See Part 1, *Prioritise Indigenous Data Sovereignty*.

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153   Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, p. 4.

154   Ibid., p. 3.

155   Rachael Pliner, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5.

156   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 2.

157   Joshua Lourensz, Executive Director, Catholic Social Services Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18.

158   Victorian Government, *Embedding lived experience research*, 3 March 2023, <https://www.vic.gov.au/embedding-lived-experience-research> accessed 14 January 2025.

159   See Part 1, Section 1.2.

160   Vivienne Nguyen, Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46.

161   Dr Nicola Helps, Senior Project Officer, ANROWS, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 33.

162   Dr Jill Gallagher, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, public hearing, Melbourne, 9 September 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5; Sheree Lowe, Executive Director of the Balit Durn Durn Centre, Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, public hearing, Melbourne, 9 September 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 6.

Inquiry stakeholders' suggestions to increase capacity to do research included:

- **Provide perpetrator focused guidance**: Provide guidance on how and when to ethically, consistently and safely undertake research on perpetration and with people who use family violence,[163] and increase researcher, research partner and participant confidence to undertake this research as well as government confidence to fund the work.[164] Guidance could include direction on mandatory reporting when conducting research[165] and provide examples of how 'service data has been previously accessed and analysed and led to new insights and system improvements'.[166]

- **Increase service providers research capacity**: Support opportunities to build service providers research and analysis capacity and capability to help them use data they collect to inform future practice, identify trends, understand service environments, identify areas for improvement and additional funding needs, and inform statewide perspectives.[167]

- **Support training on asking questions**: Through training, awareness and knowledge, practitioners can ask more probing questions to better understand complexity of both the context of offending and the profile/s of people using family violence. This problem-solving approach helps understand the nuance of situations to implement more effective solutions.[168] Data collectors/researchers can also be trained in non-collusive practices and ensuring methodologies are adapted to include behaviour-specific questions in perpetration studies.[169]

- **Protect ethics and privacy responsibilities**: Ensure ethical codes of research and privacy laws are followed to foster more confidence to conduct research with or about people who use family violence.[170] See Part 1, Section 1.2.

- **Employ experts**: Invest in data analysts, policy experts and statisticians to extract information from routine databases to provide meaningful and accurate analysis.[171]

- **Promote opportunities for co-production**: This can make research inclusive. Research project funding could allocate budget for community-based staff, victim survivors and people who use/have used family violence to co-produce work, or provide flexibility to allow time for establishing partnerships with communities.[172]

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163   Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 45*, p. 10; Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

164   Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 45*, p. 10; Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

165   Matt Tyler, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15.

166   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 1.

167   Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 5; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 22; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 7; Tania Farha, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

168   Rasha Abbas, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46.

169   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 10.

170   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 2; Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 45*, p. 8.

171   Bianca Brijnath, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22.

172   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 15.

FINDING 67: Using complex data for research to meaningfully drive change in family violence reform and prevention requires skill and expertise, particularly to ensure it is critically analysed and considers nuance and context. Through training, awareness and knowledge, data can be collected from or about, or research co-produced with, people using/who have used family violence to better understand the nuance or contexts of offending and profiles.

RECOMMENDATION 55: The Victorian Government, in implementing Recommendation 2, provide guidance to researchers and service providers on how and when to ethically, consistently and safely undertake research on perpetration and with people using/who have used family violence.

4

4.3   Make data more accessible

A key recommendation from Inquiry stakeholders was to increase access to public, digitised, disaggregated and de-identified data for services and researchers.[173] This includes on ethnicity,[174] disability,[175] First Nations identity,[176] gender,[177] geographical location,[178] LGBTIQA+ communities,[179] elder abuse[180] and context of family violence behaviours, including coercive control,[181] to inform policy responses[182] and better understand experiences of diverse cohorts of victim survivors.[183] Publicly reported disaggregated data on people who use family violence, including for diverse cohorts, has and will help researchers and policy makers identify cohorts with unique drivers and develop targeted, culturally appropriate and place-based interventions. This data must be combined with relevant contextual information to ensure it is used appropriately.[184]

Inquiry stakeholders identified a need for better public place-based regional data, which could bring together the data from different service providers in a region.[185]

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173   Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, received 29 May 2024, p. 2; National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, received 30 May 2024, p. 5.

174   Djirra, *Submission 8*, received 27 May 2024, p. 3; Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, p. 6.

175   Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 9.

176   Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 3; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 8.

177   Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 3.

178   Ibid.; Patrick Cook, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15; Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15; Max Broadley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29.

179   Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, received 31 May 2024, p. 2.

180   Council on the Ageing Victoria and Seniors Rights Victoria, *Submission 52*, received 7 June 2024, p. 14.

181   Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3.

182   Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 3.

183   Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 2.

184   Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, p. 5; Thorne Harbour Health, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 23 August 2024, p. 2.

185   Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 3; Patrick Cook, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15; Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 15; Max Broadley, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 29, 31.

Profiles, life courses and drivers for people who use family violence vary between postcodes and metro/regional areas, requiring different responses. Data can help ensure services are adapted appropriately to regional profiles.[186] See Appendix B for a discussion about privacy considerations in small communities. Place-based analysis of datasets on people who use family violence is important to ensure data used for funding or strategic purposes reflects 'on-the-ground realities'.[187] Improving the linkage of local government area data with police, court and service provider data could contribute to more meaningful analysis that allows local services to understand family violence and trends in their community and tailor interventions.[188]

Inquiry stakeholders suggested publishing more disaggregated and de-identified data through the FVDB.[189] CSA noted this is primarily limited by low data quality (where data is missing or unknown, including First Nations and country of birth data) and confidentiality (making sure the granular data does not identify people). Improvements to administrative data will help drive disaggregated and de-identified data quality.[190] See Part 2, Section 2.1. CSA advised it would like to provide more disaggregated data, but requires more granular data from service providers.[191] See Section 4.3.1 below. Service providers' willingness to share family violence data even when anonymised was noted as a challenge,[192] but confidence to share may be overcome through reassurance that no public data can identify individuals.[193]

Inquiry stakeholders' suggestions to increase publicly accessible data also included:

- **Make more data publicly available**: Improve and make publicly available data on what works to help service providers design programs to address service delivery gaps[194] and allow victim survivor service providers to analyse data to coordinate support and safety for victim survivors.[195]

- **Develop MARAM data dashboards**: MARAM data could be provided in a dynamic, live dataset, dashboard or visualisation tool to present insights and trends, helping understand community need in specific regions and allowing researchers and service providers to access, use and analyse the data. It could include a statistical linkage key to identify people repeated in the dataset.[196]

- **Population-based database**: Create a population-based database on the use of family and sexual violence, including different perpetration markers like prevalence,

186 Max Broadley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 29.

187 Darrylin Galanos, Acting Manager, Client Analytics and Reporting, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 48.

188 Municipal Association of Victoria, *Submission 29*, p. 2.

189 Switchboard Victoria, *Submission 43*, pp. 3–4.

190 Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 11, 16.

191 Ibid., p. 16.

192 The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 4.

193 See, Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5.

194 Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 7.

195 Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 7.

196 Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 60, 62–63, 65.

attitudes, reinforcing factors, exposure to past violence, or things that weaken pro-social behaviours.[197]

It is also important to increase analysts and researchers' (working for either service providers, government or research institutes) capacity, access to data[198] and ability to maximise use of data and its insights to inform interventions and policies.[199] Inquiry stakeholders' suggestions to increase access to data and ability to analyse and use it included:

- **Provide peak bodies and key organisations with access to more data**: Provide peak bodies with access to data, allowing them to play a central role in analysis, evaluation and data dissemination in their sector, and better plan services and identify trends, outcomes and improvement areas.[200] This applies to the sexual violence and AOD sectors in particular, and data access should be timely, affordable and accessible.[201] The family violence sector can also be supported to enhance their abilities to aggregate and analyse the data it collects.[202]

- **Provide FVRICs with access to more data**: Ensure FVRICs have access to relevant and granular-level data, currently given voluntarily by service providers based on local partnerships.[203] Increase the capacity of FVRICs to analyse data will help inform regional program adaption or redesign and evaluation.[204]

- **Increase access to existing data for researchers and service providers**: Increase researchers access to existing datasets (for example, the CVDL).[205] Approval processes to access data can be long, particularly because some government departments may have limited capacity to easily extract, de-identify and provide sufficiently disaggregated data.[206] Systems for researchers and service providers to access de-identified administrative data could be established, which may require updating funding agreements to collect data in a format usable for research.[207]

- **Increase access to TOD data**: Authorising TODs to provide more data to other organisations for analysis would help understand the services and responses needed in different regions.[208] The final TOD opened in late 2022, meaning a

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197 Mika Pediaditis, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 39; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 2.

198 Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 62.

199 Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 1.

200 Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, *Submission 22*, received 30 May 2024, p. 9; Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5; Amanda Alford, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 22; Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 32–33; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 6.

201 Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, *Submission 22*, p. 9; Meg Bagnall, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 32–33.

202 McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, p. 10.

203 Max Broadley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31.

204 Ibid., pp. 31, 36.

205 Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 18.

206 ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 1; Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information,* p. 4.

207 Ibid.

208 Elaine Williams, Principal Strategic Advisor, Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 32–36; Max Broadley, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 34–36; Karen Todd, Barwon Health Representative, Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 33–35.

full year of TOD operational data now exists. FSV is working 'to provide greater access' to this data through the TOD sector report 'which will be an interactive and flexible portal providing access to key data points from intake through to referral'. In August 2024, FSV advised it was 'working to provide access imminently to [TOD] sector partners and other key stakeholders' before being rolled out progressively 'over other tranches'.[209]

- **Improve data visualisations and platforms**: Implement a system for service providers and sectors to see consolidated trends (this could also incentivise staff and organisations to provide data).[210] This may include creating a central data platform for agencies and researchers that provides a dynamic view of people who use family violence by aggregating and analysing longitudinal and point-in-time qualitative and quantitative data.[211] Some agencies have developed their own dashboards to understand client profiles and changes in client profiles over time, but this could be at a larger scale.[212]

- **Support researcher and service provider partnerships**: Outside of government agencies and systems, promote partnerships between researchers and service providers.[213] While the desire to collaborate is generally strong, service providers have varying capacity to extrapolate data to provide to researchers.[214]

- **Formalise links with universities and researchers**: Provide access to data and enable PhD students to analyse complex linked datasets.[215] For example, facilitating PhD students' access to demographic and qualitative data held by service providers in PDFs or case notes is an opportunity for research.[216]

- **Support data stewards to prepare data for research**: Data stewards (for example, governments and policymakers) can make the data they have on people using family violence more accessible for analysis to inform reform and be provided with support to prepare existing data for research and analysis.[217]

- **Use Corrections Victoria data for research**:[218] This is an opportunity considering its improved database functionality[219] (see Part 2, Section 2.3.2). For example, Corrections Victoria has released data to researchers in the past[220] and a survey

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209   Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 59.

210   Kathleen Maltzahn, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 5.

211   Christine Robinson, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

212   Kirsten Majidi, Principal Strategic Advisor, Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 64–65.

213   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 1.

214   Dr Nicola Helps, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 38.

215   Dr Jozica Kutin, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

216   Jessica Seamer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 38.

217   ANROWS, *Submission 15*, p. 5.

218   Elena Campbell, Associate Director, Research, Advocacy and Policy, Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4.

219   Jenny Hosking, Assistant Commissioner, Sentence Management, Corrections Victoria, Department of Justice and Community Safety, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 20.

220   Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4.

on family violence and attitudes to family violence was conducted with men and women in the corrections system (although the results were kept internal).[221]

- **Support service providers to contribute data**: Service providers, particularly smaller ones, can be provided opportunities to contribute their data to social services datasets outside of funding reporting requirements.[222] For example, MBCPs can be supported to distribute the data and research on their programs more proactively.[223]

> **FINDING 68:** Increasing access to publicly available, disaggregated, de-identified and place-based family violence data in a dynamic format, as well as making existing datasets and resources more accessible, helps researchers, peak bodies, sectors and service providers to better understand people who use family violence. As a result, this supports:
>
> - the development of targeted programs and interventions to address service delivery gaps
>
> - understanding of the experiences/needs of diverse cohorts, and emerging trends, outcomes and improvement areas related to people using family violence.

> **RECOMMENDATION 56:** The Victorian Government, in implementing Recommendation 1 to undertake a data mapping project, identify and make publicly available, where possible, administrative and linked datasets on family violence.

> **RECOMMENDATION 57:** The Victorian Government support peak bodies, sectors and service providers who work with people using family violence and Family Violence Regional Integration Committees to:
>
> - access family violence data and analysis
>
> - promote research partnerships and collaboration between these bodies, government agencies, The Orange Door Network, researchers and research institutes.

> **RECOMMENDATION 58:** The Victorian Government support State departments and agencies holding data on people using family violence to prepare existing data for research and analysis and enable relevant service providers to contribute their data to social service datasets.

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221 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 21.

222 Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 3, 14.

223 Wendy Anders, Chief Executive Officer, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 12.

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4.3.1 Crime Statistics Agency

Victoria's CSA is well placed to use different data sources to understand people who use family violence through research and analysis. CSA's work linking data is world leading.[224] Since 2016, CSA has undertaken several research projects on people who use family violence using police records.[225] Government departments commission CSA to undertake specific research on a cost recovery basis and CSA produces self-directed research. These are published on CSA's website where possible.[226]

Within a limited budget, CSA prioritises research based on urgency and feasibility, trying to meet as many needs as possible. CSA advised it is increasingly servicing policy and legislative change developments to inform decision-making.[227] CSA tries to complete small requests to its open data request service within existing resources, but requests are rare as most services rely on existing databases like the FVDB.[228]

CSA has access to law enforcement, court, youth justice, corrections and DJCS data, and for specific projects other data can be linked in collaboration with the Victorian Government to form a more holistic view.[229] CSA has recently signed a memorandum of understanding with TOD Network to access its data,[230] that will be added to the FVDB. The Committee notes that on 4 December 2024 the CSA released its 2023–24 FVDB that included TOD data for the first time.[231] As with other datasets that are included in the FVDB, this is presented in a dynamic format.[232] Including data from AOD and mental health services, family court, family violence helplines and community legal services in the FVDB, is also of interest.[233] CSA is re-engaging with federal and state agencies like inTouch, Safe Steps and Seniors Rights Victoria about data access (as it did in the COVID-19 pandemic to support a one-off research project).[234]

However, rather than adding data sources to the FVDB, linking the service sector data CSA receives would add depth to the data that exists.[235] This would 'increase the granularity' of the data, enabling more 'linkages between sources to give that

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224 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 23.

225 This includes on 'typologies of family violence perpetrators', 'adolescent family violence incidents', 'adolescent sibling offending', and the differences, risk factors and characteristics for 'generalist and specialist family violence perpetrators' Crime Statistics Agency, *Family violence*, <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/research-and-evaluation/publications/family-violence> accessed 15 January 2025.

226 Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 2, 12. For example, in 2019 the Department of Premier and Cabinet commissioned a research project on 'statistical typologies of Victorian family violence perpetrators to establish which subcohorts may require varied policy and service responses'.

227 Ibid., p. 12.

228 Ibid., p. 13.

229 Ibid., pp. 2, 15. Access to this data is collaborative and based on memorandums of understanding or legislation.

230 Ibid., pp. 3–4.

231 Crime Statistics Agency, *Crime Statistics Agency releases 2023–24 Victorian Family Violence Database*, media release, 4 December 2024.

232 Crime Statistics Agency, *Family violence dashboard,* December 2024, <https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/family-violence-data/family-violence-dashboard> accessed 11 March 2025.

233 Crime Statistics Agency, response to questions on notice, pp. 1–2.

234 Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 8–9.

235 Crime Statistics Agency, response to questions on notice, pp. 1–2.

richer picture' to show pathways, connections and overlaps in service provision, particularly for social services data that is less linear than justice data.[236] To link more data, CSA requires either de-identified data with statistical linkage keys or data with personal identifiers so CSA can link and de-identify.[237] Barriers to achieving this include organisational willingness and capacity to provide the data and privacy concerns,[238] for example, because it is a new process or because services require resources to cleanse the data.[239]

CSA 'look[s] forward to the opportunity to harness resources to be able to do further analysis and build that evidence base to inform the sector, policy development and decision-making'.[240] With increased investment, CSA can publish more data and research and accelerate data acquisition work.[241]

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> **FINDING 69:** The Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) is well placed to use different incident and system-based justice data sources for research and analysis. Increasing CSA's access to, and linkage between datasets held about people who use family violence data with more granularity (for example, from alcohol and drug and mental health services, family court, family violence helplines and community legal services), would provide a richer picture to better understand perpetration pathways, and connections and overlaps in service provision.

> **RECOMMENDATION 59:** The Victorian Government increase the Crime Statistics Agency's (CSA) resources and capacity to undertake research and analysis projects about people using family violence, and support CSA's work to acquire additional family violence data sources and link social service data with more granularity to provide a richer picture of family violence perpetration pathways, connections and service use.

4.3.2 Coroners Court of Victoria

The Coroners Court of Victoria's data sources provide rich information to strengthen responses to family violence and support prevention.[242] The Court can obtain a range of family violence related material, including statements from witnesses and loved ones, family violence history reported to police and statements and records from organisations like health professionals, MBCPs, specialist family violence services, housing services, Corrections Victoria and Child Protection. This supports the Court to

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236 Fiona Dowsley, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 4.

237 Ibid., pp. 4, 11–12.

238 Ibid., p. 8.

239 Ibid., p. 12.

240 Ibid., p. 4.

241 Ibid., p. 16.

242 This includes the Court's Victorian Homicide Register, Victorian Suicide Register and Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths—a specialist unit that identifies risks, contributing factors, patterns and trends for family violence deaths and responses to family violence using a broad range of evidence. See Coroners Court of Victoria, *Submission 59*, received 14 June 2024, pp. 2, 6.

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review family violence-related deaths and 'identify trends and patterns in responses to family violence' by reviewing 'a broad range of evidence that assists to build a more complete picture of the patterns of family violence perpetration and the context in which family violence related deaths occur'.[243]

Increasing the capacity of the Coroners Court of Victoria to investigate and analyse the circumstances of all family violence related deaths, and code, analyse and disseminate related data to relevant stakeholders for research is an opportunity to support better outcomes.[244] Enhancing the Court's database functionality to collect/collate better data on perpetration would help understand prevalence, journeys, drivers, trends and patterns, risk and contributing factors to lethality. In turn, helping identify opportunities to intervene at different service touch points, hold people accountable and keep people using family violence in view.[245] This would also assist with family violence policy, framework and program review, targeting intervention and prevention strategies[246] and ensuring evidence arising out of relevant Coroners reports are reflected in MARAM risk factors.[247]

Improving understanding of the link between suicide and family violence, particularly for young people, is an opportunity. This is important because suicide prevention and aftercare services are not always able to screen for family violence risk.[248] Improving the capacity of the Coroners Court of Victoria to conduct inquests and death reviews will help ensure information and learning is accessible in a timely manner.[249] The *Victorian suicide prevention and response strategy 2024–2034* describes different ways to strengthen understanding and identification of the link between family violence and suicide. For example, by establishing 'a consistent approach for collecting and sharing data related to suicide attempts, intentional self-harm and deaths from suicide and other key data, including overdose and family violence, to inform prevention and response efforts'.[250]

> **FINDING 70:** Increasing the Coroners Court of Victoria's ability to collate and analyse family violence-related data would improve understanding of family violence prevalence, journeys, drivers, trends and patterns, risk and contributing factors to lethality, opportunities to intervene at different service touch points, hold people accountable and keep them in view, and the relationship between suicide and family violence. This could help contribute to the development and review of family violence related policy, interventions, programs and frameworks.

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243   Coroners Court of Victoria, *Submission 59*, pp. 2–3.

244   Ibid., p. 6; Sheila Harrison, *Submission 4*, received 29 April 2024, p. 1.

245   Coroners Court of Victoria, *Submission 59*, pp. 6–7.

246   Ibid., p. 7.

247   Amber Griffiths, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 58.

248   Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, pp. 15–16; Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 7–8.

249   Elena Campbell, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 8.

250   Other examples include that the Department of Health's Suicide Prevention and Response Office will support family violence workforces in contact with people experiencing suicidal distress and crisis 'to better understand suicide and contributing factors and support help-seeking activities'; and work collaboratively across departments and agencies to test new solutions to address social determinants like family violence that disproportionately contribute to suicide. Department of Health, *Victorian suicide prevention and response strategy 2024–2034*, 2024, pp. 39, 43, 45.

> **RECOMMENDATION 60:** The Victorian Government support the Coroners Court of Victoria to better investigate and analyse the circumstances of all family violence-related deaths to build a more complete picture of the patterns of family violence perpetration and the context in which family violence related deaths occur (including the link between suicide and family violence) and code, analyse and disseminate associated data to relevant stakeholders for research.

4.4 Ensure evidence is coordinated and builds on existing research

Victoria's system to collect and access family violence data for research is one of the best internationally.[251] Evidence about perpetration is needed for government and organisations to make informed decisions that enable primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery systems to work together effectively.[252] However, currently much of the evidence to inform understandings of effective strategies to address family violence comes from data systems designed for a different purpose (service provision) and short-term 'snapshot' research (often using inconsistent data from different systems).[253] While researchers regularly provide valuable knowledge and actionable insights at the federal and state levels, this research is not systematically brought together to create a rich evidence base and inform decision-making about future research priorities.[254]

Inquiry stakeholders' suggestions for a coordinated and iterative research approach included:

- **Implement a strategic approach**: Adopt a systematic, strategic, integrated and long-term approach to research, monitoring and evaluation to understand the impact of interventions, what works, what needs to change and the impact of change,[255] and to data linkage and storage for 'big data projects' that 'track cohorts across service systems contacts and over time'.[256] Regular, comparable and consistent data on perpetration and consistent definitions in research can help ensure different research findings can be integrated.[257] Research, monitoring and evaluation must also be embedded in initiatives from the outset[258] (this also applies to MBCPs and interventions,[259] see Part 3, *Learning what works: programs for people using family violence*).

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251 The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 2.

252 Amanda Alford, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 14.

253 The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 2.

254 Phillip Ripper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 49.

255 The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, pp. 1, 2; Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information,* p. 5.

256 Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information,* p. 5.

257 Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, p. 3; Dr Hayley Boxall, response to questions on notice, p. 1.

258 The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, p. 3.

259 Dr Silke Meyer, *additional information,* p. 5.

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- **Implement a strategy**: Implement a national perpetration strategy to ensure research and evidence is coordinated, effective and collaborative.[260] Alternatively, the Victorian Government could take a leadership role and introduce a state perpetration strategy.[261] It could cohesively bring together current and past practice-based and population-based research and knowledge on context, tactics, nuance, complexity, psychology, drivers, system interactions, people not in contact with the service system, journeys and pathways, intervention points, opportunities and best practice interventions for people who use family violence.[262] Implementing a perpetration strategy would also help identify the gaps and pathways forward.[263] A similar option is to consider a perpetrator research agenda.[264]

- **Better understand research gaps**: Bring together completed and upcoming research, with involvement from researchers themselves, to better understand the data gaps.[265] The ANROWS Register of Active Research, for example, provides 'a comprehensive landscape' of current Australian research relating to domestic, family and sexual violence.[266] Given many of the topics to know more about discussed in Part 3 were included in the Family Violence Research Agenda 2021–2024 (see Appendix C), a review could help understand what research questions have been addressed and what gaps remain.

- **Ensure research is integrated and builds on existing evidence base**: Ensure new research and research funding is integrated and aligned with existing work, for example, Australian Government research funding, ANROWS research grants and other states' research funding.[267] Data collection must contribute to a strong body of evidence about what works to change behaviour and factors critical to success,[268] and emerging data trends must inform a contemporary evidence base on behaviours, risk, safety and how to work with people who use family violence.[269]

- **Integrate research into practice**: The knowledge developed by advancing research and data collection into pathways in and out using family violence finds its value in how it is integrated into practice.[270] The intimate knowledge developed from working directly with people using family violence over the past must shape policy.[271] For example, better research on family violence and its intersections with other variables like substance use, acquired brain injury and mental health will lead to 'greater sophistication in data collection and analysis', and reviewing

260   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 16.

261   Amanda Alford, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18. If the Victorian Government introduces a state perpetration strategy, consideration should be given to how it aligns with FSV's recently announced perpetrator study (see Part 4.1.4).

262   Phillip Ripper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 46.

263   Ibid., p. 49.

264   National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, p. 3.

265   Professor Kate Fitz-Gibbon, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 43.

266   ANROWS, *Register of Active Research*, <https://www.anrows.org.au/register-of-active-research> accessed 15 January 2025.

267   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 16; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 19.

268   Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 2.

269   Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, received 30 May 2024, p. 13.

270   No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 22.

271   Rebecca Buys, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51.

the emerging evidence on what is 'risk relevant' behaviour and profile information for people who use family violence would help improve information sharing practices.[272]

The Victorian Government's support for research on people using family violence should align with its overarching strategies, frameworks and plans to ensure ongoing coordinated implementation of family violence reform. For example, Part 1, Recommendation 1 to conduct a data mapping project of the existing datasets that can answer key questions about people using family violence will inform understanding of the research and linked data to prioritise. This links to the next rolling action plan for *Ending Family Violence: Victoria's 10 Year Plan for Change* (as noted in *Strong Foundations*). *Strong Foundations* notes that research, and monitoring and evaluation data in particular, will help to '[c]ontinue to shift the focus onto people who use violence' and provide them with the 'right services, at the right time'. Changing people who use family violence's behaviour over the long term is 'one of the best ways [to] keep victim survivors safe'.[273]

FINDING 71: Research on people using family violence should build on what is already known and inform future government planning and policy through a systematic, strategic, integrated and long-term approach. The knowledge developed by advancing research and data collection must be integrated into practice. This will help shift the focus onto people who use family violence and their behaviour change over the long term through effective service provision. It will also help keep victim survivors safe.

RECOMMENDATION 61: The Victorian Government report on the Family Violence Research Agenda 2021–2024 outlining what research questions have been addressed and what gaps remain, and then produce a research strategy or plan (aligned with the Victorian Government's overarching family violence strategies, frameworks and plans) that identifies research priorities to increase understanding of people using family violence. This should include a focus on efforts to improve data collection, linkage and integration of research into practice, and articulate how current and planned research will be considered cohesively to build on existing evidence and identify future research pathways.

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272 Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14.

273 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Strong Foundations*, p. 38.

Conclusion
Where to from here

What we call on you to do is to look deeply at the complexity of the issues of family violence … if we are to get to the heart of family violence, we must start collecting and analysing useful information. So we would be saying: whatever you come up with, let us make sure that it has a use and that that use is known right up-front. You are starting a journey of delving deeper and establishing a more complex understanding of the dynamics of family violence, and what we need to know is more about who uses family violence and why. This inquiry is an opportunity to advance that understanding also of what works, for which [person] and at what time. Developing a deeper and more complex understanding of family violence and its perpetration will enable us to make significant inroads into stopping it.

No to Violence[1]

Family violence is a complex problem, interlinked with other aspects of peoples' lives. Achieving a fuller understanding of the cohort of people using family violence will help make significant inroads into stopping family violence,[2] while continuing to prioritise the safety and voices of victim survivors.[3] Understanding family violence more deeply and acknowledging its complexity can also help build a service system that meets different people's diverse needs and creates meaningful change.[4]

Data collection is an important part of understanding people who use family violence and their interactions with the family violence system in Victoria. To build a fuller picture, we must continue to bring together existing data collection with research and evaluations. Enhancing data collection processes and databases, continued information sharing and data linkage projects will also help to achieve this goal. This work must always align to the Victorian Government's overarching family violence strategies, frameworks and plans; and be prioritised to identify what immediate solutions will have the greatest impact and enable more long-term change.

This is why Part 1, Recommendation 1 on mapping what existing data can and has the potential to do,[5] as well as Part 4, Recommendation 61 on collating existing and planned research, are especially important. Fully understanding what questions can be answered about people using family violence by linking or analysing currently

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1   Phillip Ripper, Chief Executive Officer, No to Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 45.

2   Ibid.; Rebecca Buys, Head of Policy and Research, No to Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52.

3   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Strong Foundations: Building on Victoria's work to end family violence*, 2023, p. 38.

4   Rebecca Buys, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 52.

5   Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, received 12 September 2024, p. 4.

available data and research will help focus the Victorian Government's future priority areas to target gaps in understanding.

Consultation with relevant sectors, peak bodies, researchers, service providers and practitioners working with people who use family violence will be central in implementing any reforms from this Inquiry. Greater dialogue between the Victorian Government and other stakeholders can help facilitate this. Effectively monitoring outcomes and progress to ensure goals are achieved will also assist in increasing understanding about people using family violence.

The purpose of any data collection, sharing and use must be kept front of mind. Data on people using family violence should inform evidence-based approaches to mitigate risk and keep victim survivors and young people safe, and inform strategic and practice development to change behaviour. This information can also help understand outcomes and impacts for people directly and indirectly affected by family violence.[6]

There are many benefits to the Victorian Government adopting a systematic and strategic approach to improving data collection and sharing,[7] together with high-quality analysis and research,[8] about people using family violence. These include helping to:

- **Inform big picture decision-making**: Guide the Victorian and Australian Governments' evidence-based, effective and targeted approach to ending family violence,[9] drive commitment and investment across systems,[10] better inform policy development, service planning, law reform and funding allocation,[11] including applying an intersectional lens to reflect the needs of diverse communities.[12]

- **Track outcomes and measure efficacy**: Track progress against the Victorian Government's family violence reforms,[13] develop a better idea of what works,

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6   Jac Dwyer, Practice Development, Training and Capacity Building Projects, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 57.

7   Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, received 30 May 2024, p. 13.

8   Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, received 31 May 2024, p. 7.

9   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, received 30 May 2024, p. 6.

10   Ibid.

11   Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, received 17 May 2024, p. 2; YSAS, *Submission 9*, received 28 May 2024, p. 12; Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, received 28 May 2024, p. 1; Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, received 29 May 2024, p. 1; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, received 31 May 2024, p. 5; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, received 31 May 2024, p. 18; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, received 31 May 2024, p. 4; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, received 31 May 2024, p. 4; The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, *Submission 48*, received 31 May 2024, p. 7; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, received 14 June 2024, p. 3; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, received 14 June 2024, pp. 1, 7.

12   Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 49*, received 31 May 2024, p. 2; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 4; Vivienne Nguyen, Chairperson, Victorian Multicultural Commission, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40; Ella Mackay, Manager Family Safety and Child Wellbeing, Cafs Ballarat, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

13   Elaine Williams, Principal Strategic Advisor, Barwon Area Integrated Family Violence Committee, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

measure efficacy of interventions,[14] and better inform support for people using family violence leading to behaviour change.[15]

- **Understand and provide support and services across the system**: Understand and provide informed support and services across the whole service system,[16] including for families,[17] young people[18] and victim survivors,[19] and better assess, manage and develop strategies on risk for victim survivors,[20] provide them with programs[21] and keep them safe.[22]

- **Enable nuanced and normalised discussion**: Provide a more nuanced discussion on people who use family violence,[23] challenge stereotypes and myths,[24] and normalise work that prevents further violence[25] and research and data collection on perpetration as legitimate and necessary.[26]

- **Understand trends**: Better understand patterns, trends,[27] common characteristics and risk factors for people using family violence,[28] and people using family violence's engagement with services and systems,[29] re-occurring offending,[30] high-risk individuals[31] and referral pathways.[32] Hold people who use violence accountable,[33] keep them in view to the system,[34] identify people who use family violence currently undetected,[35] and use understanding of trends and patterns that emerge to develop rehabilitation and education programs.[36]

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14   Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 13; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 18; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 4.

15   Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, p. 2.

16   Tom Bowerman, Acting Executive Director, Services, Berry Street, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 57.

17   Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 1.

18   YSAS, *Submission 9*, p. 12.

19   Berry Street, *Submission 31*, received 31 May 2024, p. 19; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 17; Jac Dwyer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 57.

20   Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 13; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 1.

21   Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 1.

22   Meli, *Submission 7*, received 27 May 2024, p. 4; Djirra, *Submission 8*, received 27 May 2024, p. 2.

23   Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 7.

24   Ibid.

25   Ibid.

26   Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 45*, received 31 May 2024, p. 9.

27   Bisexual Alliance Victoria, *Submission 11*, received 28 May 2024, p. 2; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 1; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 6.

28   Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 1; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 8.

29   Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 4; Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, p. 2; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14.

30   Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 4.

31   Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 4.

32   Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 4; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 4.

33   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 6; MacKillop Family Services, *Submission 41*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3.

34   Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 14.

35   Ibid.

36   Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 10.

- **Understand and manage demand for services**: Inform regional and statewide understanding of current and future service demand, and required resource allocation.[37] Identify gaps in service provision/unmet need and opportunities for innovation,[38] including where services for diverse communities are under-utilised or in-demand and require further funding,[39] and understand how systems are integrating in different localities.[40] Use data to plan, design and evaluate services,[41] including place-based responses,[42] improve outcomes for clients and ensure the need of populations/communities are met.[43] Reduce administrative burden on frontline services.[44]

- **Tailor services for different communities**: Better understand community need and prevalence to plan and deliver programs,[45] better tailor interventions, programs and systems for different communities to meet the needs of victim survivors and people who use family violence,[46] allow service providers to use data/evidence to develop and tailor responses, programs and interventions,[47] and develop more effective interventions and nuanced responses that disrupt trajectories, including for people with complex needs.[48] Data must be collected to inform a comprehensive view of people who use family violence in a way that addresses intersectionality 'and accounts for family violence that occurs across all demographics, religions, cultures, and socio-economic groups'.[49]

- **Empower First Nations communities**: Data on family violence in First Nations communities should be used to prioritise prevention and early intervention by addressing drivers like racism and intergenerational trauma.[50] The development and implementation of Indigenous Data Sovereignty should be supported.[51]

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37   Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 13.

38   Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, p. 2; Southern Melbourne Family Violence Regional Integration Committee, *Submission 17*, p. 13; Elaine Williams, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

39   National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 6.

40   Elaine Williams, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

41   National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 5; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 3.

42   Elaine Williams, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

43   National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 5.

44   Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 7.

45   Meli, *Submission 7*, p. 4; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 18.

46   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 15; Vivienne Nguyen, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 40; Relationships Australia Victoria, *Submission 6*, p. 2; Centre for Multicultural Youth, *Submission 63*, received 14 June 2024, p. 1.

47   Margaret Chipperfield, *Submission 12*, p. 1; McAuley Community Services for Women, *Submission 28*, received 31 May 2024, p. 10; Peninsula Health, *Submission 32*, received 31 May 2024, p. 1; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 18; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 1; Lisa Robinson, Director, Family Safety and Therapeutic Serivces, Meli, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 25.

48   Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, received 5 June 2024, p. 10.

49   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 22.

50   Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, received 31 May 2024, p. 12.

51   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 11; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, pp. 6–7; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, received 31 May 2024, p. 5; Sexual Assault Services Victoria, *Submission 30*, received 31 May 2024, p. 8; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, received 31 May 2024, pp. 3–4; Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 17; ANROWS, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to written questions on notice received 9 October 2024, pp. 6, 16; Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, received 26 July 2024, pp. 5–7; Centre for Innovative Justice RMIT University, *Submission 64*, received 23 June 2024, p. 37; Djirra, *Submission 8*, p. 1.

- **Inform prevention and early intervention**: Better inform prevention[52] and early intervention efforts,[53] from broadscale awareness campaigns and education,[54] to more targeted programs and initiatives.[55]

Minimising and addressing family violence and other harms is a collective responsibility and the intersections of family violence with different aspects of peoples' lives means policies, strategies, plans, frameworks and ongoing reform activity must align across different sectors.[56] This Inquiry and its recommendations must link to the Victorian Government's overarching strategies, frameworks and plans to ensure ongoing coordinated and aligned implementation of family violence reform.

An independent whole-of-system family violence oversight mechanism in Victoria would complement reform by ensuring accountability for how the family violence and different sectors operate and collaborate. It would also provide oversight of enhancements to data collection, storage, sharing, linkage, use, analysis and research for people who use family violence, and inform continuous reform in data collection, evidence-informed service delivery, and strategic alignment.

> **... the Victorian community have led reform in relation to domestic, family and sexual violence and prevention of that violence, and there is a real opportunity through this inquiry, through development of the next rolling action plan, to consolidate that leadership, to take the opportunity to look at what is working, how we could build and strengthen on those things and think about what the next steps are, what the gaps are, what the opportunities are and what the next pieces of the puzzle are. The work in relation to perpetrators absolutely, in our view, falls into that category ...**

> **We know for many years data collection, evidence and interventions have had a focus on victimisation, so we absolutely pay tribute to victim-survivors, but we also know that keeping victim-survivors safe requires looking at perpetrators and identifying the threat to those victim-survivors, which is why this inquiry and these discussions are such an important piece of the puzzle.**

Our Watch[57]

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52   Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare, *Submission 14*, p. 1; Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 6; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 5; Women's Health Grampians, *Submission 33*, received 31 May 2024, p. 2; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 22; Thorne Harbour Health, *Submission 39*, p. 4; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 11; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 7; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 4; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 1; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28; Meli, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 2 September 2024, p. 1.

53   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 6; Australian Association for Restorative Justice, *Submission 10*, received 28 May 2024, p. 7; National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 5; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 22; Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation, *Submission 40*, p. 12; Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 7; Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, p. 1.

54   Our Watch, *Submission 16*, p. 12.

55   Ibid.; Western Integrated Family Violence Committee, *Submission 46*, p. 4.

56   Gillian Clark, AOD Strategy and Reform Manager, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 31.

57   Amanda Alford, Director of Government Relations, Policy and Evidence, Our Watch, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 13.

Appendix A
Data frameworks and data collection

A.1 Which data frameworks/data collation points apply?

Data capture mechanism	Data framework applies to [data capture mechanism]/Data collation point accesses [data capture mechanism's] data											Notes
	MARAM[a]	FVISS[a]	CISS[a]	Central Information Point (CIP)	Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme	Family Violence Data Collection Framework (FVDCF)	Resource Management Framework (RMF)[b]	Service delivery tracking/ Funded Agency Channel[c]	Family Violence Outcomes Framework (FVOF)	Crime Statistics Agency (CSA)	Centre for Victorian Data Linkage (CVDL)[d]	
The Orange Door (TOD)	✓	✓	✓	**X**	**X**	✓	✓	**X**	✓	✓	✓	
Family Safety Victoria (FSV)	✓	✓	✓	✓ (DFFH)	✓ (DFFH)	✓ (DFFH)	✓ (DFFH)	**X**	✓	✓	**X**	FSV leads the implementation of MARAM and FVISS, and DE leads the implementation of the CISS. See MARAM Annual Report https://www.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-03/MARAM-Consolidated-Annual-Report-2022-23.pdf p. 7.
Risk Assessment and Management Panels	✓	✓	✓	**X**	**X**	**X**	✓	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	
Victoria Police	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**X**	**X**	✓ (DJCS[e])	✓	✓	
Magistrates' Court	✓	✓	✓	✓	**X**	✓	**X**	**X**	**X**	✓	**X**	
Coroners Court of Victoria	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	NA	**X**	✓	✓	**X**	Collects data for the Victorian Homicide Register and Victorian Suicide Register. See Coroners Court submission https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/4ae93e/contentassets/f393a815bad848259c9cd716411c8b78/submission-documents/059_24.06.14_ccv_redacted.pdf. Coroners Court is not prescribed by MARAM, however much (but not all) of the data collected in the Victorian Homicide Register does align to MARAM, and Coroners Court data has been sought for the review of MARAM. Coroners Court has not specifically aligned to the FVDCF as family violence and family violence data is not the core business of the Coroners Court. The FVOF has an indicator of decreasing family violence deaths with a measure of number/proportion of family violence related deaths annually – Coroners Court data is used to measure this.
Corrections Victoria (Current state)	✓	✓	**X**	✓	**X** (DJCS)	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**	MARAM has not been implemented in prisons yet and considerations around data collection practice and framework will be undertaken as part of implementation planning.

| Data capture mechanism | Data framework applies to [data capture mechanism]/Data collation point accesses [data capture mechanism's] data | | | | | | | | | | | |
	MARAM[a]	FVISS[a]	CISS[a]	Central Information Point (CIP)	Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme	Family Violence Data Collection Framework (FVDCF)	Resource Management Framework (RMF)[b]	Service delivery tracking/ Funded Agency Channel[c]	Family Violence Outcomes Framework (FVOF)	Crime Statistics Agency (CSA)	Centre for Victorian Data Linkage (CVDL)[d]	Notes
Victoria Legal Aid (VLA)	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	VLA uses a Client Safety Framework for risk identification (https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/family-violence-our-response). It 'is not a safety planning tool or ongoing risk management framework' but supports staff to: identify safety risk indicators; understand the nature of risk (particularly high risk); provide safety-informed legal advice; and make appropriate referrals to support services.
No to Violence/Men's Referral Service	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	
State-funded Men's Behaviour Change Programs (MBCPs) and other family violence perpetrator initiatives	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	Includes DFFH-funded MBCPs and other interventions like case management and cohort trials.
State-funded housing/ homelessness services	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓ (Supported Accommodation Family Violence)	✓	✓	✓	Includes DFFH-funded homelessness services that report data through the Homelessness Data Collection.
State-funded specialist family violence services for victim survivors	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
State-funded sexual assault/violence services for victim survivors	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓ (Sexual Assault Support Services and Sexually Abusive Behaviour Treatment Services)	X	X	✓	

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Definitions

Framework: An overarching shared understanding or agreement that influences the approach to collect, share, use or analyse data, including data about people who use family violence.

Data collation point: A point where data is collated from multiple sources and interpreted to help manage risk, gain insight and inform decision-making, including data about people who use family violence.

Notes

a. For the purposes of this document, the table in the source has been interpreted as column 1 Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM), Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS) and Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS), as column 2 MARAM and FVISS, as column 3 FVISS only, column 4 CISS only. See https://content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-03/MARAM-Consolidated-Annual-Report-2022-23.pdf Appendix 1, pp. 60–61.

b. All Victorian government departments (and specified agencies) must measure and report on their service delivery performance in compliance with the RMF. The RMF requires departments to measure output delivery and outcome achievement. For example, current relevant performance measures include: 'Number of calls responded to by the statewide crisis helpline for victim survivors of family violence'; 'Number of men participating in the Men's Behaviour Change program'; and 'Satisfaction of clients with Support and Safety Hub Services'. See 2024–25 Department Performance Statement, https://s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/budgetfiles202425.budget.vic.gov.au/2024-25+Department+Performance+Statement.pdf pp. 39–40.

c. Organisations/service providers that have contracts with Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH), Department of Health (DH), Department of Education (DE) must collect specific data and report back as part of their service agreements. Service delivery tracking (https://fac.dffh.vic.gov.au/service-delivery-tracking) requires performance data to be submitted monthly through the Funded Agency Channel.

d. Publicly available.

e. Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS).

Additional frameworks or data capture mechanisms

The Family Violence Research Agenda and program collectively supports 'the whole of government approach to research on family violence and sexual violence and harm, across primary prevention, early intervention and crisis and recovery responses. It will also complement monitoring and evaluation, outcomes measurement and monitoring and data development activities underway across government, as detailed in the Rolling Action Plan' (https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-reform-rolling-action-plan-2020-2023). See Progressing research on family violence (https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-family-violence-research-agenda-2021-2024/progressing-research-family-violence).

The Dhelk Dja Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability Plan (MEAP) is a framework applied only to the Dhelk Dja partnership forum. The MEAP provides a guide to track and evaluate progress against the Dhelk Dja Agreement. The FVDCF is used by the Dhelk Dja MEAP to improve data collection of Indigenous specific data relating to family violence (https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-recommendations/improve-collection-indigenous-specific-data-relating-family; https://www.vic.gov.au/dhelk-dja-monitoring-evaluation-and-accountability-plan).

The *Nargneit Birrang* is a framework that guides service design, implementation and evaluation for Aboriginal services and communities in Victoria, and funding guidelines, compliance, indicator measures and evaluation for the Victorian Government 'across multiple departments and agencies'. However, it is unclear what data is required to be captured under this framework and how it is used. *Nargneit Birrang Framework*, (https://content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-01/Nargneit%20Birrang%20Framework%20Report%20December%202019_0.pdf) p. 10.

Other possible data capture mechanisms include the Sentencing Advisory Council and private organisations and services such as banks, telcos, counsellors etc. Some private organisations/services also fall under Schedule 3 *Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005* (Vic) for the Victorian Reportable Conduct Scheme.

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FVISS: Annual report on the implementation of the MARAM Framework 2022–23, (https://content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-03/MARAM-Consolidated-Annual-Report-2022-23.pdf) pp 60–61; Family Violence Information Sharing Guidelines, Guidance for Information Sharing Entities, (https://content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-04/Ministerial%20Guidelines%20-%20Family%20Violence%20Information%20Sharing%20Scheme_2.pdf) Chapter 2; Who can share information under the information sharing and MARAM reforms (https://www.vic.gov.au/ciss-and-fviss-who-can-share-information).

CISS: Annual report on the implementation of the MARAM Framework 2022–23, (https://content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-03/MARAM-Consolidated-Annual-Report-2022-23.pdf) pp. 60–61; Who can share information under the information sharing and MARAM reforms (https://www.vic.gov.au/ciss-and-fviss-who-can-share-information).

CIP: The Central Information Point (https://www.vic.gov.au/central-information-point).

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FVDCF: Family Violence Data Collection Framework, (https://content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2019-11/Family-Violence-Data-Collection-Framework-October-2019.PDF), pp. 9–11.

RMF: The Resource Management Framework Part 1 of 2 – Main document July 2024, Resource Management Framework - Part 1 of 2 - Main Document - effective 1 July 2024 (https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-10/Resource-Management-Framework-Part-1-of-2-Main-Document-effective-1-July-2024.pdf) p. 2; Resource Management Framework (https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/planning-budgeting-and-financial-reporting-frameworks/resource-management-framework); Standing Directions 2018 (https://www.dtf.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-10/Standing-Directions-2018_0.docx), p. 31.

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FVOF: Family Violence Outcomes Framework: Measuring and monitoring implementation strategy, 2020, (https://content.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-01/Family-Violence-Outcomes-Framework-Implementation-Strategy_0.pdf), pp. 20–25.

CSA: Explanatory Notes and Definitions, Crime Statistics Agency Victoria (https://www.crimestatistics.vic.gov.au/family-violence-data/explanatory-notes-and-definitions).

CVDL: Victorian Agency for Health Information, What we do (https://vahi.vic.gov.au/ourwork/data-linkage/what-we-do); Safer Care Victoria, Victorians set to enjoy improved access to linked data via the Victorian data Access Linkage Trust (https://www.safercare.vic.gov.au/news/victorians-set-to-enjoy-improved-access-to-linked-data-via-the-valt)

A.2 Why is the data being collected?

Definitions

These definitions outline the purposes for which data is collected, as listed in the top row of the table below.

Manage risk	Share info	Provide service	Provide referral	Hold accountable	Track engagement/ keep in view	Monitor service demand	Funding decision/ reporting	Inform policy	Evaluate/design program	Research, analyse, understand	Public accountability
Collects data to assess and manage risk under Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM)	Collects data to share with other organisations (e.g. those that manage risk) under Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS), Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS) or another avenue	Collects data to provide a service to person using family violence	Collects data to refer person using family violence to a service	Collects data to promote people using family violence's capacity to acknowledge and take responsibility for their actions and impacts (through informal or formal response mechanisms) and work to change their behaviour	Collects data to keep the person using family violence visible to the service system, including actively monitoring changes to risk behaviours used and the coordination and collaboration of service providers to intervene in a timely way to reduce or remove risk and support safety	Collects data to monitor service demand for people using family violence	Collects data to inform funding decisions or report on funding allocations relevant to services for people using family violence	Collects data on to inform or advocate on policy issues about people using family violence	Collects data to evaluate and design programs for people using family violence	Collects data for research and analysis, including if data provided to Crime Statistics Agency (CSA) for analysis

Collects data to understand trends for people using family violence in, or from, diverse communities and/ or to tailor programs/ interventions for people using family violence | Collects data on people using family violence for performance measures or annual reporting |

Key

Yes, identified: **YI** Yes, de-identified: **YD** No: **X**

Data capture mechanism	[Data capture mechanism] collects data on people using family violence to [purpose]:												Notes
	Manage risk	Share info	Provide service	Provide referral	Hold accountable	Track engagement/ keep in view	Monitor service demand	Funding decision/ reporting	Inform policy	Evaluate/ design program	Research, analyse, understand	Public accountability	
The Orange Door (TOD)	YI	YI	YI	YI	YI	YI	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	Also collects data to triage and identify primary aggressor.

Also collects data on responsiveness in service delivery, for example, the number of people referred/seeking support, service use by diverse clients/number and characteristics of clients, support provided and cases closed. |
| Family Safety Victoria (FSV) | X | X | X | X | X | X | YD | YD | YD | YD | YD | YD | Refers to other data collected by FSV (e.g. for program management and evaluation), over and above data collected for the purposes of TOD, Central Information Point (CIP), MARAM and Family Violence and Sexual Assault programs. |
| Risk Assessment and Management Panels | YI | YI | YI | YI | YI | YI | YD | YD | YD | YD | YD | YD | |

Data capture mechanism	[Data capture mechanism] collects data on people using family violence to [purpose]:												
	Manage risk	Share info	Provide service	Provide referral	Hold accountable	Track engagement/ keep in view	Monitor service demand	Funding decision/ reporting	Inform policy	Evaluate/ design program	Research, analyse, understand	Public accountability	Notes
Victoria Police	YI	YI	YI and YD	YI	YI	YI	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	Also collects data to prioritise/triage/investigate cases; identify, monitor, and analyse issues, trends, and developments in Victoria Police operations, police training methods, social conditions or community attitudes and ensure that the training needs of the region are addressed; to inform family violence pilot programs and trials.
Coroners Court of Victoria	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	YD	YD	X	YD	YD	Collects data for Victorian Homicide Register, Victorian Suicide Register and Victorian Systemic Review of Family Violence Deaths with the primary purpose of informing coronial investigations, findings and recommendations. Data is provided for the purposes of funding decisions/reporting, informing policy and research and analysis on request and in line with agreements, such as with CSA.
Corrections Victoria (Current state)	X	YI	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	Currently family violence data collection is limited in the adult custodial corrections system and is not utilised for any of the purposes listed in the table. However, family violence related information is collected on individuals and shared under FVISS where required.
Corrections Victoria (Future state)	YI	YI	YI	YI	YI	YI	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	A project is underway to upgrade the adult custodial corrections IT system that will enable family violence data collection. This upgrade is intended to go-live in 2025 for Community Corrections Services and in 2026 for prisons.
Victoria Legal Aid (VLA)	YI	X	YI	YI	X	X	YI	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	VLA is not a prescribed entity under MARAM/FVISS but uses a Client Safety Framework (https://www.legalaid.vic.gov.au/family-violence-our-response) for risk identification. It 'is not a safety planning tool or ongoing risk management framework' but supports staff to: identify safety risk indicators; understand the nature of risk (particularly high risk); provide safety-informed legal advice; and make appropriate referrals to support services.
No to Violence/ Men's Referral Service	YI	YI	YI	YI	YI	YI	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	
State-funded Men's Behaviour Change Programs (MBCPs) and other family violence perpetrator initiatives	YI	YI	YI	YI	YI	YI	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	Includes Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) funded MBCPs and other interventions like case management and cohort trials.

Data capture mechanism	[Data capture mechanism] collects data on people using family violence to [purpose]:												Notes
	Manage risk	Share info	Provide service	Provide referral	Hold accountable	Track engagement/ keep in view	Monitor service demand	Funding decision/ reporting	Inform policy	Evaluate/ design program	Research, analyse, understand	Public accountability	
State-funded housing/ homelessness services	YI	YI	YI	YI	YI	YI	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	Includes DFFH-funded homelessness services that report data through the Homelessness Data Collection.
State-funded specialist family violence services for victim survivors	YI	YI	YI	YI	YI	YI	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	While data collected on victim survivors, data not necessarily collected on people using family violence.
State-funded sexual assault/violence services for victim survivors	YI	YI	YI	YI	YI	YI	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	YD	While data collected on victim survivors, data not necessarily collected on people using family violence.
Data collation points													
Central Information Point	YI	YI	X	X	X	YI	X	YD	X	YD	X	YD	CIP does not collect data but collates existing data sources.

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Notes

Definition of data capture mechanism: An identified way to collect, share, use or analyse data about people using family violence.

Data capture mechanisms have been identified through desktop research. See, https://www.fvrim.vic.gov.au/report-family-violence-reform-implementation-monitor-1-november-2020/workforce.

Explanation of data capture purpose: (source for 'Hold accountable' and 'Track Engagement/keep in view': https://www.vic.gov.au/maram-practice-guides-foundation-knowledge-guide/whats-next-and-definitions).

Magistrates' Court of Victoria is excluded from this table as it does not collect data in the same manner as presented.

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Appendix B
Privacy and consent considerations

When purposefully collecting data on people using family violence and victim survivors it is important to understand the relevant privacy and consent considerations, including how they relate to data storage, sharing, linkage, use, analysis and research.

When sharing 'personal information' Victorian public sector organisations, government funded agencies and contracted service providers must adhere to 10 Information Privacy Principles (IPPs) in the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic).[1] Personal information is information about an individual whose identity is apparent or can reasonably be ascertained from the information.[2]

When sharing 'health information' Victorian public sector organisations and private organisations must adhere to 11 Health Privacy Principles (HPPs) in the *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic).[3] Health information is personal information about an individual collected by an organisation while providing a health, disability or aged care service.[4]

Both the IPPs and HPPs specify:

- personal information can be shared without consent if the organisation reasonably believes there is a serious threat to an individual's life, health, safety or welfare[5]

- personal information can be used or disclosed if it is 'necessary for research'[6] or statistical analysis if three conditions are met: the research is in the public interest, it does not identify individuals and it is impracticable for the organisation to seek the person's consent beforehand.[7]

To facilitate confidential[8] information sharing for family violence assessment or protection purposes, FVISS modifies the IPPs and HPPs. This includes ISEs not

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1   *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) sch 1 s 13.

2   *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) s 3 Definitions—*personal information*. For more information see Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, *Submission 18*, received 30 May 2024, p. 30.

3   *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic) sch 1.

4   Department of Health, *Health Records Act*, 18 August 2023, <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/legislation/health-records-act> accessed 15 November 2024.

5   *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) sch 1 s 2.1(d); *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic) sch 1 s 2.2(h).

6   What is necessary is not specified in the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) sch 1 s 2.1(c) or *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic) sch 1 s 2.2(e).

7   Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, *IPP 2—Use and disclosure: IPP 2.1(c): Necessary for research or statistics in the public interest*, 14 November 2019, <https://ovic.vic.gov.au/book/ipp-2-use-and-disclosure/#IPP_2.1(c):_Necessary_for_research_or_statistics_in_the_public_interest_ > accessed 15 November 2024; *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) sch 11 s 2.1(c); *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic) sch 1 s 2.2(e). The organisation must also reasonably believe that the recipient of the information will not disclose the information.

8   Confidential information includes both personal and health information.

being required to obtain consent from a perpetrator or alleged perpetrator to share information about them,[9] and ISEs and CIP not being required to collect personal information directly from a perpetrator or alleged perpetrator.[10]

In relation to information about people who use family violence, the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner (OVIC) advised it expects ISEs and relevant bodies to:

- only collect the minimum amount of information necessary for risk assessment and management and accountability

- only use or disclose information for purposes specified in FVISS[11]

- implement measures to protect information from loss, misuse, disclosure, modification or unauthorised access, including robust audit processes

- ensure that information collected, used or disclosed is 'accurate, current and complete'.[12]

OVIC noted more information is on its website and organisations requiring guidance should contact OVIC directly.[13]

OVIC cautioned against further modifications to IPPs to support FVISS, as the 'IPPs are flexible enough to facilitate information sharing for the purposes of the FVISS and any further carve outs are likely to add unnecessary complexity … making it more difficult for ISEs to understand their information handling obligations'.[14]

FSV has responsibility for training ISEs on how to appropriately share information under FVISS, including how 'the operation of FVISS disapplies and amends certain privacy laws that OVIC oversees'.[15] OVIC advised it received funding from government departments when FVISS first came into effect to aid OVIC's work 'supporting agencies and the public who are impacted by family violence', but as this funding has ceased, 'OVIC is limited in what it can reasonably contribute to a training program for the family violence sector'.[16]

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9   *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) s 144N. ISEs can collect and disclose confidential information about a 'person of concern' or 'a person who is alleged to pose a risk of family violence'. Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, *Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme and Privacy*, <https://ovic.vic.gov.au/privacy/resources-for-organisations/family-violence-information-sharing-scheme-and-privacy> accessed 15 November 2024.

10   *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* (Vic) s 15A; *Health Records Act 2001* (Vic) s 14B. For more information, see Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, *Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme and Privacy*.

11   The two purposes are family violence assessment and family violence protection. However, the FVISS does not intend 'to prevent an ISE from collecting, using or disclosing information where it is already allowed under another Act'. Family Safety Victoria, *Family violence information sharing guidelines: guidance for information sharing entities*, 2021, p. 8.

12   Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, *Submission 18*, p. 4.

13   Ibid.

14   Ibid.

15   Victorian Government, *Training for the information sharing and MARAM reforms*, 18 November 2024, <https://www.vic.gov.au/training-for-information-sharing-and-maram> accessed 21 November 2024; Sean Morrison, Information Commissioner, Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, correspondence, 8 November 2024, p. 2.

16   Morrison, correspondence, p. 2.

B.1   Privacy and consent considerations raised by Inquiry stakeholders

Inquiry stakeholders identified the following privacy and consent considerations in relation to victim survivors, people who use family violence and diverse communities:

- **Privacy and agency for victim survivors**: The anonymity of victim survivors and their data must be protected—they will not speak out unless fears about disclosure are allayed.[17] Victim survivors can lose agency over their data and information when it is shared outside the intent in which it was given.[18]

- **Right not to respond**: Victim survivors should have the right not to respond (particularly if they feel questions are too intrusive) 'to minimise ongoing harm and protect their health and wellbeing'.[19]

- **Impact of sharing**: Greater data sharing, including more automated data sharing, could entrench disadvantage. For example, data sharing between Victoria Police and Child Protection can increase risk that families are separated, or between Victoria Police and federal bodies can increase risk of visa cancellations.[20]

- **Risk of systems abuse**: It may be appropriate at times to limit data sharing so people who use family violence do not find loopholes or ways to avoid accountability, weaponise the service system or perpetrate further family violence.[21] Some service providers may not collect data due to the risk of systems abuse, for example, if records are subpoenaed and used to manipulate legal processes and perpetrate family violence, circumventing safety planning.[22]

- **Impact of perpetrator label**: Being labelled a perpetrator of family violence limits access to certain services and supports that may be of benefit and enables a lot of data sharing between service providers, a particular issue in the context of misidentification (see Part 2, *Prioritise rectification processes to correct misidentification*) and for young people[23] (see Part 3, Section 3.5). For example, labelling a young person who has experienced family violence as a 'perpetrator' through justice responses can sometimes preclude them from key supports like crisis accommodation.[24]

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17   Notes from the Chair meeting with the Victim Survivors' Advisory Council, 3 September 2024, p. 4; Victorian Multicultural Commission, *Submission 49*, received 31 May 2024, p. 3.

18   Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 2.

19   National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, received 31 May 2024, p. 9.

20   Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, received 14 June 2024, p. 9.

21   Bianca Brijnath, Director, Social Gerontology, National Ageing Research Institute, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, received 31 May 2024, p. 13.

22   FVREE, *Submission 37*, received 31 May 2024, p. 1; Berry Street, *Submission 31*, pp. 5, 16.

23   Meg Bagnall, Lead AOD and Family Violence, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 27, 30; Elena Campbell, Associate Director, Research, Advocacy and Policy, Centre for Innovative Justice, RMIT University, public hearing, Melbourne, 12 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2; Victoria Legal Aid, *Submission 35*, received 31 May 2024, p. 5.

24   Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, *Submission 70*, received 26 July 2024, p. 3; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, received 5 June 2024, p. 9; Dom Ennis, Acting Chief Executive Officer, YSAS, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35.

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- **Privacy for people who use family violence**: Privacy and ethics can limit how much data is collected and shared, impacting efforts to understand and address family violence.[25] While FVISS has started a cultural shift away from maintaining the privacy of people who use family violence towards information sharing to keep that person in view, interferences with privacy should not be arbitrary.[26]

- **Collective privacy**: Data for public reporting is de-identified on a personal level but identifies groups in ways that could be used negatively and cause harm.[27] The safety, dignity and privacy of communities and people already oppressed is important.[28] This particularly applies to First Nations peoples.[29]

- **Privacy in small communities**: De-identified data with geographical location requires manual data screening to ensure location data does not identify individuals, placing a burden on regional and rural service providers.[30] In small communities, where people often know each other, confidentiality is especially important.[31]

Inquiry stakeholders identified the following privacy and consent considerations in relation to systems and organisations:

- **Consent and family safety advocacy**: When people who use family violence participate in programs, family safety advocacy practices support victim survivors and inform risk assessments and understanding of behaviours. To undertake family safety advocacy, TODs provide victim survivor contact details with referrals. A reluctance to provide contact details to intervention service providers, because TODs are cautious about service providers misusing the information or because victim survivors have not been asked to provide consent, limits the effectiveness of interventions and safety of victim survivors.[32]

- **Privacy and linking data**: Data linkage and integration must protect individual privacy, for example, by ensuring the data visibility is restricted to those who need it across systems and sectors.[33] The primary barriers to expanding linked data in

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25   Ella Mackay, Manager Family Safety and Child Wellbeing, Cafs Ballarat, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27.

26   Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, *Submission 18*, p. 4.

27   ANROWS, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria, response to written questions on notice received 9 October 2024, p. 6.

28   Respect Victoria, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 10 September 2024, p. 2.

29   National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance, *Submission 27*, p. 9; ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 6.

30   Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, p. 9.

31   Amy Cupper, Manager of Family Safety, Mallee Accommdation and Support Program, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 40–41.

32   No to Violence, *Submission 61*, received 14 June 2024, pp. 13–14.

33   Dr Jozica Kutin, General Manager, Advocacy and Service Impact, Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 63; Caroline Counsel, Co-Chair of the Family Violence Working Group, Law Institute of Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Dr Lance Emerson, Deputy Secretary, eHealth, Department of Health, Centre for Victorian Data Linkage, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 2.

Victoria's Family Violence Database have been 'privacy concerns and reluctance to provide personal identifiers or linkage keys to enable this work'.[34]

- **Privacy and health or legal records**: Some health record data can only be shared by a subpoena as part of legal proceedings.[35]

- **Privacy and organisations**: Organisations may be restricted from sharing data due to confidentiality provisions in their enabling legislation[36] or because they are not prescribed ISEs and fall outside the MARAM framework.[37] Organisations may opt not to collect data if there are legal, ethical or social risks or concerns, including that data collection on people who use family violence may jeopardise an organisation's work, staff or clients.[38]

- **Privacy legislation interpretation**: Organisations may think they cannot share personal information because of constraints in privacy law.[39] This may be because of misconceptions about the law.[40]

- **Mandatory reporting obligations**: Mandatory reporting obligations can create barriers to undertaking research on family violence conducted in high-risk populations.[41] A lack of clarity on reporting obligations can deter researchers or companies. For example, 'depending on the nature of the perpetration being studied and the jurisdiction in which the research is carried out, it can often be unclear whether an exemption applies' for research purposes.[42]

- **Court data**: MCV raised concerns that linking existing data with court data 'raises significant issues concerning privacy, safety and public interest implications'.[43] MCV did not explain how to address these concerns.[44]

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34 Crime Statistics Agency, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 5 August 2024, p. 2.

35 The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists, *Submission 53*, received 12 June 2024, p. 3; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9.

36 Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, *Information sharing and privacy—guidance for sharing personal information: Systematic information sharing*, <https://ovic.vic.gov.au/privacy/resources-for-organisations/information-sharing-and-privacy/#systematic-information-sharing> accessed 15 November 2024; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9. This includes legal services, see Crime Statistics Agency, response to questions on notice, p. 2.

37 Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, *Submission 18*, p. 3; Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, p. 9.

38 Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, received 31 May 2024, p. 12.

39 Mitchell Shire Council, *Submission 66*, received 24 June 2024, p. 7; Mika Pediaditis, Research and Evaluation Advisor, Women's Health Grampians, public hearing, Geelong, 7 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 43.

40 Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, *Information sharing and privacy – guidance for sharing personal information*; Dr Kristin Diemer, Principal Research Fellow, The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, public hearing, Melbourne, 22 July 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26; FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 1.

41 Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Submission 71*, received 12 September 2024, p. 6.

42 Jesuit Social Services, *Submission 45*, received 31 May 2024, p. 8.

43 Magistrates' Court of Victoria, *Submission 50*, received 31 May 2024, p. 1.

44 MCV did not respond to the Committee's written question on notice about addressing these concerns. See the Committee's written questions on notice to MCV and MCV's response on the Committee's website: Legislative Assembly Legal and Social Issues Committee, *Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria: Submissions*, n.d., <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/get-involved/inquiries/inquiry-into-capturing-data-on-family-violence-perpetrators-in-victoria/submissions> accessed 20 December 2024.

B.2 Overcoming the privacy and consent considerations raised by Inquiry stakeholders

Inquiry stakeholder suggestions to overcome these considerations included:

- **Continue to prioritise victim survivors**: Prioritise the safety and confidentiality of victim survivors and their data,[45] and ensure they are not retraumatised or stigmatised.[46] Seek informed consent from victim survivors to share data and information where appropriate.[47]

- **Evaluate the FVDCF and data collection practices**: Evaluate the FVDCF—released in 2019—and other data collection standards or protocols, to ensure they reflect current best practice in privacy and security and address biases in data collection, intersectionality, racial profiling and misidentification.[48] Evaluating Victorian Government agencies' data collection practices, and data quality and utility could help to meaningfully understand and improve family violence prevention and response.[49] The FVDCF also identifies many of the same 'common data collection challenges' about data consistency and quality that were raised in this Inquiry.[50]

- **Develop safeguards to protect individual privacy**: Develop robust safeguards, security and access controls,[51] secure data storage to access data for both service delivery and research purposes,[52] and data protection measures.[53] This can help ensure data collection and use does not re-traumatise victim survivors,[54] and also ensure data is secure but accessible to authorised personnel to better understand and address family violence.[55] Implement data sharing safeguards so that sharing identifying data about people using family violence does not entrench disadvantage, cause further hardship or prevent access to support (for example, if it is used to deport a perpetrator of family violence, but this leaves the victim survivor

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45   National Council of Women Victoria, *Submission 23*, received 30 May 2024, p. 2; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, received 16 August 2024, p. 6.

46   Notes from the Chair and Deputy Chair meeting with Women with Disabilities Victoria, 26 June 2024, p. 2.

47   Djirra, *Submission 8*, received 27 May 2024, p. 1; Amy Cupper, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 35; Ben Rogers, Acting Chief Executive Officer, Council on the Ageing Victoria, public hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 28.

48   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, received 31 May 2024, p. 6; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 5; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 8.

49   ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 1.

50   For example, inconsistent data collection standards and lack of training, context of data collection, data collection not being core business, and economic and IT restrictions (see Background, *Consistent barriers to cross sector data collection, sharing and use*), and lack of quality assurance processes (see Part 2, *Prioritise rectification processes to correct misidentification*). See Victorian Government, *Data collection challenges and improvements*, 19 October 2020, <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-family-violence-data-collection-framework/data-collection-challenges-and-improvements> accessed 8 April 2024.

51   Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3; Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27.

52   Renee Blight, Safeguarding, Strategy and Reform Practice Lead, Social Work, Peninsula Health, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 17; inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 19; National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, received 30 May 2024, p. 3; Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

53   Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 23.

54   Caroline Counsel, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 3.

55   Ella Mackay, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 27; National Ageing Research Institute, *Submission 19*, p. 3.

with no income support or a single parent)[56] and to ensure personal information is accurate and fair and can be corrected.[57]

- **Balance privacy and sharing**: Find the right balance between privacy and sharing of risk-relevant data,[58] and privacy and collection of sensitive data for research.[59]

- **Enhance privacy for research**: Ensure research and ethics processes align with privacy and consent legislation,[60] seek consent from individuals to use data for research when appropriate[61] and implement robust processes to remove identifying information.[62]

- **Ensure clear frameworks, processes and legislation**: Develop clear frameworks, processes and risk management strategies to guide service providers to collect, store and report data,[63] publish clear guidance and protocols on data collection processes about people who use family violence in compliance with ethical standards and privacy laws,[64] and develop processes on sharing victim survivor contact details for family safety advocacy.[65] Consider enhanced legislative frameworks to protect the confidentiality and privacy of sensitive data.[66] The FVRIM recommended the FVISS Ministerial Guidelines be 'reviewed and amended to increase utility and improve understanding', including by ensuring 'case studies focus on identified areas of practitioner confusion and uncertainty' (for example, about terminology consistency between the FVP Act and MARAM, and what information can be shared, determining who information relates to and whose consent is needed).[67]

- **Develop a clear purpose**: Ensure the purposes for data collection and use are defined and support both service delivery and research.[68]

- **Consider privacy when extracting data**: Ensure extraction of data from existing datasets at the organisation level considers state and federal privacy obligations.[69]

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56   Federation of Community Legal Centres, *Submission 57*, pp. 8–9.

57   Ibid., p. 9.

58   Amy Cupper, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 40–41; Tania Farha, Chief Executive Officer, Safe and Equal, public hearing, Melbourne, 5 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, pp. 52, 54; Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, *Submission 18*, p. 4.

59   Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 22.

60   Ibid., p. 14.

61   Ibid.

62   Ibid.

63   Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 12; FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 2.

64   Law Institute of Victoria, *Submission 62*, received 14 June 2024, p. 11; FVREE, *Submission 37*, p. 2.

65   No to Violence, *Submission 61*, p. 13.

66   Berry Street, *Submission 31*, p. 5; Good Shepherd Australia New Zealand, *Submission 65*, p. 23.

67   Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Legislative review of family violence information sharing and risk management: reviewing the effectiveness of Parts 5A and 11 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic)*, 2023, pp. 23, 15–17.

68   inTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence, *Submission 34*, p. 6.

69   Catholic Social Services Victoria, *Submission 42*, p. 8.

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Privacy, consent and confidentiality considerations for data in relation to victim survivors and people who use family violence is complex. It is important that service providers and practitioners have clarity on the privacy, consent and confidentiality for data collection, storage, sharing, linkage, use, analysis and research on people using family violence.

OVIC produces resources and provides training to support service providers on the privacy, consent and confidentiality considerations for data collection, storage, sharing, linkage, use, analysis and research on people using family violence and victim survivors.[70]

In line with Part 1, Recommendation 6, the Victorian Government should continually review the 2019 FVDCF to ensure it:

- reflects current data collection practices

- addresses issues including biases in data collection, racial profiling, misidentification and privacy and security

- aligns with the defined goals and purposes of current and future data collection on people using family violence

- considers how to address common data collection challenges.

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70 Morrison, correspondence, pp. 1–2; Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, *Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme and Privacy.*

Appendix C
Victorian and Australian Government research priorities on people using family violence

C.1   Victorian Government research priorities

The Victorian Government's Family Violence Research Agenda 2021–2024 (Research Agenda) includes 'Perpetrators and people who use violence' as a priority, that will be 'supported by research that strengthens understandings of perpetrators and people who use violence and helps build the evidence base of effective approaches to perpetrator accountability and behaviour change'. Areas of interest under this priority include:

- **Characteristics**: Including on perpetrator typologies, 'social preconditions and the underpinning intent and choice to use violence, including attitudes, beliefs, needs and circumstances', and 'prevalence and contribution of current or historical trauma, including from experiencing family violence and child maltreatment'.

- **Coercive control**: Including dynamics, tactics and impacts.

- **Types of violence and patterns of violent behaviour**: Including technology-facilitated abuse and other emerging methods of family violence, and forms of violence that indicate high-risk perpetration.

- **Conditions associated with a reduction or increase in violence**: Including how this varies across cohorts and communities, risk factors correlated to a likelihood of escalation or change in risk or recidivism, protective factors and interventions that support positive behaviour change and/or lessen risk.

- **Misidentification**: Including prevalence, its nature, and effective practices and service responses. See Part 2, *Prioritise rectification processes to correct misidentification*.

- **Efficacy of and access to behaviour change approaches**: Including key settings that support early identification and intervention, gaps and existing evidence on interventions that facilitate behaviour change (and that consider characteristics, attitudes, beliefs, needs and circumstances for people who use family violence), culturally and cohort-specific responses (including culturally and linguistically diverse, First Nations and LGBTIQA+ communities, people from rural and regional areas and people with disability), the core elements of successful interventions, and the effective staging of interventions and effects on short and long-term behaviour.

C

- **Involving victim survivors in interventions**: Including best practice approaches to involving victim survivors in interventions for people who use family violence.[1]

These areas, together with the below research priorities in the Research Agenda, were all raised by Inquiry stakeholders as things the Victorian Government needs to know more about to better understand people using family violence:

- **Primary prevention**: Including on 'how systemic inequality and forms of discrimination … interact with the gendered drivers and reinforcing factors of men's violence against women; and drive family violence outside the common male to female dynamic'.[2]

- **Children and young people**: Including prevalence, risk issues, protective factors, impacts, technology-facilitated abuse, access to and effectiveness of services.[3]

- **Adolescents**: Including prevalence, drivers and protective factors, 'types of violence and the patterns of violent behaviour of adolescents who use violence in the home and/or in intimate partner relationships', connections to current and past experiences of trauma, access to and effectiveness of responses.[4]

- **Diverse communities**: Including family violence experienced and used by people from diverse communities, for example, 'the differing needs of individuals who identify with one or more diverse community, the unique dynamics of violence within diverse communities, and the drivers and protective factors that may increase or reduce that violence'.[5]

- **Sexual violence and harm**: Including 'insight into the patterns and types of sexual violence and harm used by perpetrators', 'connections between perpetration of sexual violence and other forms of violent and criminal behaviour' and technology-facilitated abuse, access to and effectiveness of sexual violence and harm services, and experiences/impacts on diverse groups.[6]

The Research Agenda aims to build 'partnerships with research organisation, universities and other relevant institutions with expertise in perpetrator interventions to conduct research to better understand perpetrator presentations and motivations'.[7]

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1   Victorian Government, *Perpetrators and people who use violence: Research priority*, 21 February 2022, <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-family-violence-research-agenda-2021-2024/research-priorities/perpetrators-and-people-who-use-violence> accessed 22 January 2025.

2   Victorian Government, *Primary prevention of family violence and violence against women: Research priority*, 21 February 2022, <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-family-violence-research-agenda-2021-2024/research-priorities/primary-prevention-family-violence-violence-against-women> accessed 22 January 2025.

3   Victorian Government, *Children and young people as victim survivors in their own right: Research priority*, 21 February 2022, <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-family-violence-research-agenda-2021-2024/research-priorities/children-and-young-people> accessed 22 January 2025.

4   Victorian Government, *Adolescent family violence: Research priority*, 21 February 2022, <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-family-violence-research-agenda-2021-2024/research-priorities/adolescent-family-violence> accessed 22 January 2025.

5   Victorian Government, *Family violence as experienced by people from diverse communities: Research priority*, 21 February 2022, <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-family-violence-research-agenda-2021-2024/research-priorities/family-violence-experienced-diverse-communities> accessed 22 January 2025.

6   Victorian Government, *Sexual violence and harm: Research priority*, 21 February 2022, <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-family-violence-research-agenda-2021-2024/research-priorities/sexual-violence-and-harm> accessed 22 January 2025.

7   Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, received 17 July 2024, pp. 7–8.

It notes a 'strong and effective family violence research program is key to delivering long-term, sustainable reform of our family violence system' and it will 'articulate government's commitment to develop a robust evidence base to inform decision making' through the following mechanisms:

- **Augment and build evidence base**: 'FSV will work closely with researchers and the sector to focus research topics on gaps in our current knowledge and seek to fund new research that builds the evidence base for interventions to victim survivors and perpetrators'.[8]

- **Translate evidence into practice**: FSV will 'identify the support necessary for research uptake and embed this support into the way we fund our research' and 'ensure that high-quality, relevant, new and existing research from around the world is translated into readily implementable policy, practice and program actions'.[9]

- **Foster collaboration between government, academia, sector-based organisations and the community to break down knowledge silos**: This is a requirement of research grants processes.[10]

- **Ensure government can make evidence-based decisions and recommendations**: FSV will ensure evidence is embedded across all of the work it does.[11]

To deliver research aligned to the Research Agenda, FSV's Research Program 2021–2024 describes how it will work with universities, industry and the sector through two phases of research grants:[12]

1. Thirteen projects, funded over the 2021–2022 financial year and announced in 2022, including 'Building the evidence base on perpetrator program attrition and participant engagement strategies' and 'Early identification, recognition, and referral of gay, bisexual, trans and queer (GBTQ) men who perpetrate violence'.[13]

2. Six projects, funded over the 2022–2023 financial year, with the specific projects not yet publicly available.[14]

The research mechanisms to achieve the Research Agenda and Research Program goals include research grants, graduate student programs, partnerships, procurement and a research working group.[15] See the Victorian Government's webpage for more detail.[16]

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8   Victorian Government, *Research agenda and program*, 3 March 2023, <https://www.vic.gov.au/research-agenda-and-program> accessed 22 January 2025.

9   Ibid.

10   Ibid.

11   Ibid.

12   Ibid.

13   Victorian Government, *Family violence research grants unveiled*, 11 August 2022, <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-research-grants-unveiled> accessed 22 January 2025; Victorian Government, *Embedding lived experience research*, 3 March 2023, <https://www.vic.gov.au/embedding-lived-experience-research> accessed 14 January 2025.

14   Victorian Government, *Phase 2 research program*, 2 October 2023, <https://www.vic.gov.au/phase-2-research-program> accessed 22 January 2025; Premier of Victoria, *New family violence research projects announced*, media release, 4 July 2023; Victorian Government, *Embedding lived experience research*.

15   Victorian Government, *Research agenda and program*.

16   Ibid. See <https://www.vic.gov.au/research-agenda-and-program>.

C.2   Australian Government research priorities

The *Australian National Research Agenda to End Violence Against Women and Children 2023–2028* identifies several research priorities that overlap with those identified in Part 3 of this Inquiry. These include '[p]athways into, and out of, perpetration', 'the role of systems, institutions and norms in enabling [domestic, family and sexual violence]', intervention points and 'the influence of factors such as mental illness, childhood trauma, pornography, substance abuse and problem gambling'.[17]

There have been several evaluations and research studies on people who use family violence,[18] many commissioned or undertaken by ANROWS (federal).[19] ANROWS received $4.3 million in the 2024–25 Federal Budget to build the evidence base on pathways into and out of perpetration, and funding in the 2022–23 Federal Budget to establish a National Priority Research Fund. This Fund provides grants to researchers, with one priority area being to build understanding and knowledge of the factors correlated to men's use of family violence.[20] Publication dates of this research span December 2025 to June 2027. See ANROWS's website for a full list.[21]

The 2024–2025 Federal Budget also provided $1.3 million over two years to support an expert panel to conduct a rapid review of approaches to prevent gender-based violence, and provide 'practice advice to Government on further action to prevent gender-based violence, including consideration of opportunities to engage men in supporting these efforts'.[22] The expert panel delivered its final report in August 2024, making 21 recommendations across six key areas.[23]

Action 2 of the First Action Plan of the *National Plan to End Violence against Women and Children 2022–2032* commits to improving 'the national evidence base by working towards consistent terminology and monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and by strengthening the collection and sharing of data and evidence'. Australian, state and territory governments work together to implement this action through the First Action Plan's Outcomes Framework and Performance Measurement Plan. The First Action Plan also recognises more research and data focusing on people using family violence is needed to inform national policies.[24]

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17   Jane Lloyd et al., *The Australian National Research Agenda to end violence against women and children (ANRA) 2023–2028*, ANROWS, 2023, p. 7; No to Violence, *Submission 61*, received 14 June 2024, p. 17.

18   Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, received 31 May 2024, p. 1.

19   Respect Victoria, *Submission 69*, received 19 July 2024, p. 9; Ray Griggs, Secretary, Australian Department of Social Services, correspondence, 12 June 2024, p. 2; ANROWS, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria, response to written questions on notice received 9 October 2024, p. 3.

20   Griggs, correspondence, p. 2.

21   Ibid.; ANROWS, *ANROWS research grants*, <https://www.anrows.org.au/research-grants> accessed 22 January 2025. See also ANROWS, response to questions on notice, pp. 8–9.

22   Griggs, correspondence, p. 1.

23   Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Rapid review of prevention approaches*, <https://www.pmc.gov.au/office-women/womens-safety/rapid-review-prevention-approaches> accessed 22 January 2025.

24   Griggs, correspondence, p. 2.

Under the '*National Plan to Respond to the Abuse of Older Australians*, the Attorney-General's Department commissioned the most extensive empirical examination of elder abuse in Australia to date, the National Elder Abuse Prevalence Study'. Delivered in December 2021, this study was the centrepiece of the *National Research Agenda on Elder Abuse*.[25]

C.3 Past work to improve programs for people who use family violence

C.3.1 MBC Minimum standards

The MBC Minimum Standards were developed in 2017 by FSV to 'enhance the safety of women and children by providing a consistent … MBCP model'. They apply to all 'Victorian Government funded MBCPs delivered in the community' and 'establish minimum requirements for program priorities and key components of program design, delivery, evaluation and staffing'.[26]

C.3.2 Past evaluations

Past Victorian evaluations of perpetrator interventions have included the 'new community-based perpetrator interventions and case management trial' (commissioned by DFFH, 2019), perpetrator accommodation and support service (commissioned by No To Violence, 2021) and MBCPs (DJCS, in partnership with the Australian Government, 2023).[27] The latter evaluation will report in June 2025, and through longitudinal methodology,[28] 'will assist in better understanding the ongoing impact of programs on perpetrator behaviour, including outcomes for persons using family violence and the safety of women, children and families'.[29] It will use CSA data to understand perpetration and consistency of data collection, and will consider how 'needs can be monitored from victim survivor safety support [work] and risk assessment'.[30] It will also use linked data for quantitative analysis.[31]

C.3.3 Research and studies

Under the Victorian Government's Research Agenda, studies into MBCPs and perpetrator interventions include a former project to build the evidence base about

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25 Australian Institute of Family Studies, *National elder abuse prevalence study: Final report*, December 2021, <https://aifs.gov.au/research/research-reports/national-elder-abuse-prevalence-study-final-report> accessed 22 January 2025.

26 Family Safety Victoria, *Men's Behaviour Change Minimum Standards*, 2017, p. 4.

27 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 7.

28 Ibid; Dr Kristin Diemer, Principal Research Fellow, The University of Melbourne Department of Social Work, public hearing, Melbourne, 22 July 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 26.

29 Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, *Submission 68*, p. 7.

30 Dr Kristin Diemer, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 18.

31 Centre for Victorian Data Linkage, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria hearing, response to questions on notice received 9 September 2024, p. 2.

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program attrition and participant engagement strategies (Monash University, released 2024) and an upcoming project to consider outcomes for multicultural communities.[32] The former project found 'that engagement [with programs] is a nuanced process influenced by readiness, motivation, referral pathways, and support systems', and '[i]n highlighting the importance of individualised support and post-program engagement [it] … advocates for a more cohesive and supportive approach towards program design and delivery'.[33]

In 2017–2019, ANROWS funded 12 projects federally under ANROWS's Perpetrator Interventions Research Priorities, focused on people who use family violence and MBCPs.[34] A key finding from these projects was that program evaluations are a valuable data collection opportunity to improve policy and practice, but is hindered by limited meaningful and rigorous data, and a key recommendation was to trial a national minimum dataset for MBCPs.[35]

C.3.4   FVRIM report

The 2023 FVRIM report *Service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family* covered similar issues to those raised by Inquiry stakeholders in Part 3, *Learning what works: programs for people using family violence*, including:

- While the range of programs and services had increased, neither demand nor diversity of perpetrator need was being met, and successful pilot programs for diverse cohorts were not being scaled up. It suggested the Victorian Government '[i]nvest in scaling up promising pilot interventions to meet demand, in particular perpetrator accommodation programs, responses for refugees and migrants and case management to prepare perpetrators for group programs'.[36]

- Service responses could be improved by addressing coordination challenges, like increased visibility of program demand, availability and completion.[37]

- Further developing Victoria's compliance and accreditation model for MBCP service providers was needed to ensure robust program delivery, along with greater oversight of compliance. It suggested the Victorian Government '[c]onvene an independent expert advisory group to provide ongoing advice to the government on best practices and establish an accreditation and compliance model for perpetrator program providers'.[38]

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32   Amber Griffiths, Executive Director, Family and Sexual Violence Programs, Family Safety Victoria, Department of Families, Fairness and Housing, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 60.

33   Kate Fitz-Gibbon et al., *Engaging in change: A Victorian study of perpetrator program attrition and participant engagment in Men's Behaviour Change Programs*, Monash University, 2024.

34   In 2024, ANROWS also funded a study into *The role and impact of Men's Behaviour Change Programs in IPV desistance pathways.* The anticipated publication date is May 2027. ANROWS, response to written questions on notice, p. 9.

35   Ibid., pp. 9–10.

36   Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms—Service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family*, 2023, pp. 9, 19, 26.

37   Ibid., pp. 9, 29–30.

38   Ibid., pp. 9, 38–39. It is noted that while Inquiry stakeholders did not raise this precise issue, it has been included here as it was covered by the FVRIM, is directly relevant to the Inquiry and similar issues were raised by Inquiry stakeholders.

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- The evidence base for a robust suite of interventions required expansion, including 'ongoing research to better understand perpetrators, the drivers of family violence and how this intersects with special needs for diverse cohorts', better outcome measures and guidance for services on what data can help measure FVOF indicators, and continued investment in evaluations, built into program funding and guided by a common evaluation framework. It suggested updating the MBC Minimum Standards 'to reflect the current range of perpetrator interventions and best practices', establishing 'a centralised database for perpetrator interventions to give referrers and decision-makers access to data about demand, available placements and participant attrition/completions' and ensuring 'appropriate data governance from the outset to enable monitoring and sharing of information pertinent to evaluations and policy decisions across Victorian Government agencies.'[39] Inquiry stakeholders supported these suggested actions.[40]

- While FSV was 'engaged in a consultative process to determine the best way to measure' FVOF indicators 'the indicators could also be further developed by making them more specific (for example, how is 'perpetrators' overall wellbeing' defined?) and by including baselines, realistic targets and timeframes for achieving those targets'. This could be accompanied by guidance 'for the perpetrator service response sector to specify the data that is needed to measure the indicators, and the roles and responsibilities for data collection'.[41]

C.3.5   Federal standards for perpetrator interventions

The National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions, released in 2015, was an initiative of the former Council of Australian Governments.[42] These do 'not prescribe operational practices or set professional practice standards' but, along with performance indicators, 'consistently guide and measure the actions o[f] governments, community partners and systems'.[43] A reporting framework with 27 key indicators was developed in collaboration with states and territories.[44]

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39   Ibid., pp. 9, 32, 34–35.

40   Australian Community Support Organisation, *Submission 51*, received 5 June 2024, p. 6; Dr Nicola Helps and Jessica Seamer, *Submission 26*, p. 4; Olsen Clark, Policy and Advocacy Advisor, No to Violence, public hearing, Melbourne, 19 August 2024, *Transcript of evidence*, p. 51; No to Violence, Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria, response to questions on notice received 10 September 2024, p. 1.

41   Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor, *Monitoring Victoria's family violence reforms—Service response for perpetrators and people using violence within the family*, p. 34. The 2023 FVRIM report did not make any suggested actions to develop outcomes and indicators.

42   Australian Department of Social Services, *National Outcome Standards for Perpetrator Interventions*, 21 November 2015, <https://plan4womenssafety.dss.gov.au/national-outcome-standards-for-perpetrator-interventions> accessed 22 January 2025.

43   Council of Australian Governments, *National Outcomes Standards for Perpetrator Interventions*, 2015, p. 2.

44   Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Family, domestic and sexual violence: Specialist perpetrator interventions*, 24 November 2023, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/family-domestic-and-sexual-violence/responses-and-outcomes/specialist-perpetrator-interventions> accessed 22 January 2025.

C.3.6 Information about Victorian research projects

The Committee notes that research projects undertaken as part of the Victorian Family Violence Research Program 2021–2024 Phase 1 can be accessed here: https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-research-grants-unveiled.

Respect Victoria research and resources are also listed here: https://www.respectvictoria.vic.gov.au/research-and-resources.[45]

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45   Victorian Government, *Family violence research grants unveiled*, 11 August 2022, <https://www.vic.gov.au/family-violence-research-grants-unveiled> accessed 9 March 2025; Respect Victoria, Research and resources, 3 September 2024, <https://www.respectvictoria.vic.gov.au/research-and-resources> accessed 7 March 2025.

Family violence services and support

If you or someone you know requires help with family violence, please reach out to a support service.

If you need emergency assistance, contact the local police or call Triple Zero 000.

If you have experienced family violence and need support or assistance, contact:

- **The Orange Door** (help for people who are experiencing family violence or who need support with the care and wellbeing of children and young people) visit orangedoor.vic.gov.au to find support near you

- **1800 Respect** (national domestic, family and sexual violence counselling, information and support service) call 1800 737 732, text 0458 737 732 or online chat 1800respect.org.au/online-chat-1800respect (24/7)

- **Safe Steps Family Violence Response Phone Line** (family and domestic violence support for Victorians) call 1800 015 188 (24/7)

- **Victims of Crime Helpline** (for victims of crime including men experiencing family violence) call 1800 819 817 or text 0427 767 891 (8am–11pm everyday)

- **Rainbow Door** (specialist LGBTIQA+ support, advice and referral line) call 1800 729 367 (10am–5pm everyday)

- **Seniors Rights Victoria Helpline** (for older people experiencing or at risk of experiencing elder abuse) call 1300 368 821 (10am–5pm, Monday to Friday)

- **Kids Helpline counselling service** (for children and young people aged 5 to 25) call 1800 55 1800 or online chat kidshelpline.com.au/get-help/webchat-counselling (24/7)

- **inTouch** (for migrant and refugee communities) call 1800 755 988 (9am–5pm, Monday to Friday) or visit intouch.org.au

- **Djirra** (for First Nations people) call 1800 105 303 (9am–5pm, Monday to Friday) or visit djirra.org.au

If you are concerned about your behaviour and its impact on your family, contact:

- **Men's Referral Service** (advice for men about family violence) call 1300 766 491 (24/7)

Thank you

The Committee heard from a range of stakeholders who shared learnings and experiences about barriers to collecting, linking, sharing and using data on people using family violence. They also put forward ideas to help increase understanding of the cohort of people using family violence.

The Committee thanks all those who participated in the Inquiry for their time, interest and contribution. The expertise of individuals and organisations in the family and sexual violence sector was integral to the Committee's Inquiry.

Visit the Committee's website to access submissions, public hearing transcripts and additional information: parliament.vic.gov.au/fvpdata.