TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria

Melbourne—Monday 22 July 2024

MEMBERS

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WITNESS

Fiona Dowsley, Chief Statistician, Crime Statistics Agency.

The CHAIR: Good afternoon. My name is Ella George, and I am the Chair of the Legislative Assembly's Legal and Social Issues Committee. I declare open this public hearing of the Committee's Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria.

I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the lands on which we are meeting, the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin nation, and I pay my respects to their elders past, present and future.

I am joined today by my colleagues the Deputy Chair Annabelle Cleeland, the Member for Euroa; Jackson Taylor, the Member for Bayswater; Chris Crewther, the Member for Mornington; and Cindy McLeish, the Member for Eildon.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank everyone participating in the inquiry through submissions or hearings. We greatly appreciate your time and effort in contributing to this important inquiry. The Committee has received a number of valuable submissions to date, which can be viewed on our website. We recognise that evidence in this inquiry may be distressing and urge people to reach out for support. You can contact Lifeline on 13 11 14, 1800RESPECT or the Blue Knot Helpline on 1300 657 380.

The Committee will hold five further days of public hearings in August. Today the Committee will hear from Fiona Dowsley, the Chief Statistician at the Crime Statistics Agency.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard and broadcast live. While all evidence taken by the Committee is protected by parliamentary privilege, comments repeated outside this hearing may not be protected by this privilege.

Witnesses will be provided with a proof version of today's transcript to check, together with any questions taken on notice. Verified transcripts, responses to questions taken on notice and other documents provided during the hearing will be published on the Committee's website.

I welcome Fiona Dowsley, the Chief Statistician from the Crime Statistics Agency. I invite you to make a brief opening statement of no more than 10 minutes. This will be followed by questions from members. Thank you.

Fiona DOWSLEY: Thank you very much, and thank you to the Committee for the invitation to come and speak before the inquiry. I would like to also acknowledge that this hearing is being held on the land of Wurundjeri people, and I pay my respects to elders past and present and acknowledge their continuing and unbroken relationship with these lands.

Just as a brief opening statement, I think understanding the behaviour of people using violence within the family is critical if adequate interventions and solutions to this significant public safety challenge are to be developed and implemented. It is not possible, however, for the state to identify all cases of family violence that occur, and therefore it is not possible to identify all perpetrators of family violence. Family violence occurs within the private sphere, and behaviours are often hidden from direct and external observation. There will always be a proportion that is undiscovered. The complexity of family violence perpetrator data lies not only in the challenge of identifying those alleged perpetrators but also in the multifaceted nature and range of information that may be sought by policymakers designing interventions—not just how many but who and why.

From intimate partner violence to child abuse and elder abuse, people use violence within diverse relationships and dynamics, and that requires considered and multi-method approaches to data collection and analysis. Despite the changes in public discourse around family violence that coincided with and followed the Royal Commission into Family Violence in Victoria, societal stigma, fear of retaliation or unintended outcomes and legal barriers further impede the discovery and therefore the accurate documentation of people's use of violence against family members. In addition to under-reporting and under-detection, there are also data collection limitations, legislative limitations and fragmented recording systems that can be a hindrance in gaining that complete picture. 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. Despite those measurement challenges, we are presently able to capture a significant amount of data about

perpetrators of family violence from their contacts with main government agencies concerned with responding to family violence.

Victoria is well placed to utilise a range of data sources to understand our identified family violence perpetrator cohorts, the antecedents to violence and trends in prevalence and incidence and to evaluate interventions to determine what creates the behaviour change required to reduce family violence. I should say in making my statement I am going to be primarily focused on observations about data assets that we can use to support research, analysis, monitoring and evaluation rather than operational data flows, because that is not really my day to day.

Briefly, just to summarise my background before going into a bit more of the work of the agency and what we can do, I am a criminologist by training. I have an honours degree in criminology and a masters in public policy management. I spent 10 years in the ABS working primarily in crime and justice statistics, including developing information development plans and statistical frameworks around family violence. I joined the Victorian public service in 2014, becoming the foundational Chief Statistician of the Crime Statistics Agency, and it is in the context of that role that I am appearing today.

There are two functions that the Chief Statistician of the Crime Statistics Agency has under our legislation. The first is the publishing and release of statistical information relating to crime in Victoria, and the second is to undertake research into an analysis of crime and criminal justice issues and trends in Victoria. We release recorded crime statistics every quarter, which include statistics about the number and nature of family incidents responded to by Victoria Police and the criminal offences and incidents arising in the context of those incidents, which is about half.

Since 2015 the CSA has also been responsible for the collection and production of the Victorian Family Violence Database, which is refreshed on an annual basis, and our continued role in the production and development of that database was a recommendation of the royal commission. We also undertake research analysis, and where possible we release those papers on our website, and from time to time we are also funded to complete specific projects of works. For example, in 2019 there was published the Victorian Family Violence Data Collection Framework we developed to support consistent data collection around family violence, and a research study examining the statistical typologies of Victorian family violence perpetrators to establish which subcohorts may require varied policy and service responses. That was also commissioned by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and is on our website. Another example is the creation and publication of the Prevention of Family Violence Data Platform, which was commissioned by Respect Victoria. We also frequently provide data requests and conduct analyses to support internal policy development for the department and government.

In terms of the data we hold, we hold law enforcement data from Victoria Police obviously—that is very much our core bread and butter and why the CSA was created—but we also receive court data to support particular statistical analyses and projects. We can access youth justice and corrections data and a range of other datasets from within the Department of Justice and Community Safety. For specific projects we also collaborate with our partners across the Victorian Government and can leverage other data assets to be able to look at a more holistic view around family violence and other topics. We have also long linked our data across the justice system to support our analytical projects to enable us to look at pathways through the system and the efficacy of certain interventions.

I will just speak very briefly about some of those major products. The Victorian Family Violence Database will be very well known to lots of people. It has existed for over 20 years, and it is genuinely a unique resource. It is a one-stop shop. We produce a range of different datasets within that database, so instead of having to go to different sources, people can go to one place. Data is published free on the website. It is republished in lots of places and is used extensively across the sector. In line with recommendations from the Royal Commission, we have sought to integrate data in that resource where possible, and the current family violence database on our website shows a justice-connected view where people can see matters moving through the criminal justice system. As mentioned, we have also produced that Prevention of Family Violence Data Platform for Respect Victoria. That portal focuses on collating and presenting data on indicators more focused at that primary prevention stage, including 35 different sources around the prevalence of violence and community attitudes.

In terms of our broader data ecosystem in Victoria, as I mentioned, Victoria is quite well served when it comes to data sources in relation to family violence and to family violence alleged perpetrators. Data collection in relation to family violence is generally collated in the course of provision of a service. So all the data that we are sourcing for most of these projects comes from administrative by-product data—we are taking it from an operational agency. We rely on data, as I mentioned, from Victoria Police, courts, other justice agencies but also the broader social services sector such as child protection, homelessness services and victim services. When it comes to the family violence service sector, that 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.

From a justice perspective, things are a bit simpler. We have a somewhat more linear system. For analysis purposes we primarily identify our alleged perpetrator cohorts from their initial police contact and their L17 form that is recorded there. I can talk more about that if you would like. That gives us an opportunity to not only look at pathways through the criminal justice system and how perpetrators are being held to account in the criminal justice system but also a range of other factors around the incidents themselves. We are also able to look at intervention orders and their breaches.

Our programs in corrective services in our community corrections areas also generate information about people who use violence in a family context as part of their risk assessments and interventions. There are all those broader capture points around when ambulances attend and hospital and child protection matters through the Orange Door and mandatory notifications that end up in the sector as well.

In terms of some specific challenges, I have alluded to a couple implicitly there, but I would also like to briefly articulate some of those fundamental issues that we have to either overcome or allow for when we are doing analysis of family violence perpetrators. The first is obviously that fundamental one of unreported cases. The system cannot know what it cannot see, cannot respond to what it cannot see, and we cannot capture it for analysis either. There can be a range of reasons why people are not willing to or not wanting to report or not feeling able to report. There can be fear of engagement with the state and official services that can be a hindrance to those disclosures. There can be challenges in understanding underlying motivations behind these behaviours—why people are using violence. There is the fact that a lot of family violence is, in the nature of itself, hidden or covert abuse. Particularly emotional and financial abuse can be very, very hard for any kind of external observation, and there is often no physical evidence, which can make it more challenging for people to report. There can be genuine privacy and confidentiality concerns that people have, a reluctance to disclose, the fact that some of the complex relationships involved in these family dynamics—i.e. as a partner, a parent, a caregiver, a child—can make disclosure difficult and socio and cultural factors as well. In particular, cultural safety can be a barrier for people looking to report.

So while efforts can be made to improve data collection methods and address some of these challenges, there will always be fundamentally some limitations to what we can capture and see. The biggest gaps that we tend to see in our administrative by-product collections that we are accessing tend to be around socio-demographic variables, particularly around intersectionality. LGBTIQ status, for example, is often not captured well. Ethnicity is often quite limited in the way it is captured.

So in terms of opportunities, just to finish off, I think there are a number of opportunities where we can improve our available data, and we are working towards a number of these. There is development of some national linked data assets at the moment. That is in development and that will give us an ability to look at some really significant areas that we cannot currently, particularly around interjurisdictional movement of alleged perpetrators of family violence across borders and also potentially being able to access some other national datasets to fill in some of those challenging areas around more complex socio-demographic variables. It may be difficult to capture disability, for example, through some of our local datasets, but if I can link it to a national dataset that has good indicators, then we can fill in some gaps.

We are also looking forward to being able to continue to develop the family violence database. We have just recently signed an MOU with the Orange Door, which will be the first new asset we have brought in for a little

while, and we are always exploring ways that we can add to the granularity and the accessibility of the outputs from that.

In summary, the state has, from my point of view, some pretty rich data assets to exploit. There are limitations, but we can do a lot of really interesting work and really valuable work. We look 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. So I hope this introductory information is useful, and I look forward to answering any questions the Committee has or any issues you would like to explore further.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Fiona, for that excellent opening statement. I have got some questions to start off with, then I will hand over to my colleagues. My first question is in regard to the family violence dashboard. What additional data do you think could improve the family violence dashboard?

Fiona DOWSLEY: I will start by explaining a little bit of the history there, because it is relevant to where we maybe want to go. The family violence database, as I mentioned, is a 20-year-old collection. In some ways it is shaped by what was possible in the past and possibly not necessarily all the things we would like to do in the future. So in terms of being able to add breadth, depth and extra utility to that database, from our point of view it is about being able to bring in more of the connective information between the different sources. Historically we have received information from each agency very separately, often in aggregate form— the tables that you can see on our website that get produced. What we are wanting to do more of is to be able to link data together so that we can show the pathways and the connections and the overlaps, because whilst, for example, what we have got on there at the moment does have some linked views, it is primarily the criminal justice view. As I say, it is a system that we find easier to link. It is relatively linear—people can have different journeys, but it is mostly a linear system. When we are in the social services space things can get a little bit more overlapping in terms of people's engagement. They can be engaged with multiple different services. We would like to be able to show that, and at the moment that is something that is a bit challenging for us. So it is about being able to try and increase the granularity that we can look at and being able to do more of those linkages between sources to give that richer picture.

The CHAIR: And are you not able to do those linkages between sources at the moment because you do not have access to all those full data inputs from some of those other social data collection points?

Fiona DOWSLEY: That is right. The way we have historically received and are now currently receiving most of those inputs is in a deidentified way. It is aggregated, so we cannot necessarily link it together, so we need to be able to either obtain data with linkage keys so that we can get that person view more connected or identify data so that we can do it ourselves.

The CHAIR: What are some of those barriers to having that at the moment? Is that on the end of the person or the organisation providing that data to you?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Primarily the organisation. In at least one of our data providers' instances they would like to be able to give us identified data, but they have a legislative barrier there in their underlying legislation that blocks that so they are then not feeling enabled to do that with their current arrangements. But primarily yes, it is just that we would need people to be able to give us that information and be happy to sign off its use in that product.

The CHAIR: And, Fiona, if you have got any specific recommendations about datasets that you think would benefit a family violence dashboard and what some of those barriers are, if you would like to provide us that information on notice we would be really grateful to have that—some specific examples. Does the CSA have access to sentencing data?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Some. We can see outcomes of that. It gets fed back through some of our systems that we can collect, so yes, we can see some of those outcomes.

The CHAIR: Do you think you need to be seeing more sentencing data to be able to paint that fuller picture?

Fiona DOWSLEY: No. I am just trying to think. I think we could do quite good things around sentencing data. Our challenge is sometimes where, because we are linking people from the beginning of the system, we

are going from when they have had their first contact with Victoria Police and Victoria Police have identified it as a family violence related matter, that is what we are seeking to follow through the system. So provided we can match up the case as it then appears in the court with the original incidence, then we can follow it all the way through and we can ascertain that it is a family violence-related sentence.

The CHAIR: Okay. And would access to cross-jurisdictional data like family law information also help form that fuller understanding?

Fiona DOWSLEY: We have done that before. During COVID we did a one-off variation on our family violence database just to be able to explore what was happening during a pretty unprecedented period of time. There was a lot of concern from the sector about what the impact of COVID-19 was going to be on people at risk of or experiencing family violence. So we did a product that specifically focused on trying to see that and as a result we brought in a whole lot of extra sources we do not normally see, and the family court was one of those providers who gave us some one-off data just to be able to support that analysis. It is something where we would like to re-engage and see if we can get them on board for a long-term product, because it is a critical part of that system.

The CHAIR: Great. And what would you need to re-engage with the family court and have that as a more long-term piece for you?

Fiona DOWSLEY: It is on our list, and it is really just a matter of being able to test their willingness to be able to do that on an ongoing basis, because there are implications for the agency—giving you data, in terms of their resources and their ability to do that, so it is something we have got on our list.

The CHAIR: Great. Are there any data sources that should not be added to the family violence dashboard?

Fiona DOWSLEY: That should not be? I do not think so, purely because by definition the way that we output data is de-identified. There is no way you can find an individual person. So in terms of sensitivity of a dataset, you would not be able to tell who the individual was. That would be normally my number one consideration if you are looking to publish information: can anything happen if someone identifies them? You would make sure that that is not the case. The only other issue would be if it was a matter of national security or something like that, and there would not be many sources that I think that would be relevant to. So no, I think it is a fairly safe place for data to be presented and deposited.

The CHAIR: Thanks. I have got another question before I hand over to my colleagues. In your opening statement you spoke about undiscovered family violence and the family violence that might happen behind closed doors that is not reported through the ways that you are capturing data. Do you think that there is a way we can discover that undiscovered family violence or a way to capture that data?

Fiona DOWSLEY: The best way for accessing that is through more survey means. Surveys are a great way of being able to understand what is happening in the community without people having to go that extra formal step. If, for example, people have a particular fear of going to an authority or they do not want a justice response, or that is not the assistance they are looking for, but if someone asks them the right question, they might just tell them what is going on. For example, the ABS run the Personal Safety Survey. It is still considered the gold standard for collecting information in this field because it relies on a personal interview where no-one else can overhear what is being said, and people are much more willing to disclose in that scenario than they are in another context where something might happen. I think if there are methodologies where there is confidentiality guaranteed—people are in a private setting, it is a safe setting—people will disclose, and that is the best way that you can get an idea of what that actual community prevalence is.

The CHAIR: Have you given any thought, I guess in a bit more detail, about what a national survey in this area could look like to capture more data around people using violence?

Fiona DOWSLEY: There is some interesting work that the Australian Institute of Criminology have most recently been doing, where they have been looking at sexual violence offenders. I think that provides a bit of a template. If done the right way, you can get some metrics around that. I think there is always some methodological challenge when you are asking people to disclose something that they fundamentally do not want to disclose. There is a whole lot of self-censoring that people do in certain contexts around behaviours that they know are not socially desirable, or in this case are illegal. There are ways that people have gone about that.

Again, confidentiality is key, as is getting a methodology where people feel like they are safe to disclose the things that they are being asked to disclose. But I have to say in this sector there has traditionally been a focus on most survey instruments talking to victims as opposed to perpetrators.

The CHAIR: Do think that is something that needs to change?

Fiona DOWSLEY: I think it is useful to explore. Again, whether a methodology can come through that can collect what people need to collect in a way that is valid and that is not subject to some of that self-censoring, for example, I think is something that could be explored.

The CHAIR: Great. Thank you. Cindy.

Cindy McLEISH: Thank you very much. You said you are their foundational statistician. So you have been in the role for 10 years?

Fiona DOWSLEY: That is right.

Cindy McLEISH: How many people are in the office?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Specifically in CSA—I would have to take that on notice, just because it is part of a broader business unit and I would have to untangle some aspects to tell you exactly how many are strictly in the CSA.

Cindy McLEISH: Has it grown over the 10 years?

Fiona DOWSLEY: It has, yes.

Cindy McLEISH: And is the capacity at the moment enough to deal with all the analysis that is required?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Absolutely not. It is the sort of work where the questions that people want us to answer are endless. You could honestly have a team as big as you like and we would still have demand that is hard to meet. There are always things that people would love us to look at, but we have to prioritise.

Cindy McLEISH: The specific terms of our inquiry are looking into the mechanisms for capturing data on the profile and volume of perpetrators of family violence. Do you think you have got a lot of that data already and it is not being utilised?

Fiona DOWSLEY: I think we have good access to all the information that we have, around particularly alleged perpetrators moving through the system. I think we have pretty good capture there on who is moving through the system and their characteristics et cetera, particularly the characteristics of what has occurred. I think through the data we receive through the social services we get another aspect of that. So in terms of the sources we can access, I think we have pretty good capture of the perpetrators that are moving through those aspects of the system.

Cindy McLEISH: With that would you have any information about—I guess if there is a recidivist and they get reformed or whatever, do you capture any of that sort of stuff or does it just sort of stop dead?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Well, there are a few different ways you could look at it. For example, if we have someone who has had repeat contacts with the criminal justice system, we can see all those different points of contact—at least to see if they cease. If there is a particular program that someone has been sent on, part of an evaluation might look at that particular cohort of people who have gone through that program and how that has affected their recontact, for example. So that is something that we can do.

Cindy McLEISH: Does anyone ask that information?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Yes.

Cindy McLEISH: How frequently?

Fiona DOWSLEY: The frequency is hard to answer, but certainly in terms of evaluations, most programs get evaluated. Certainly there is a program of work there. In terms of people's recontact with the system, that is

something that is produced in our quarterly statistics, and it is something that we look at on a quite frequent basis.

Cindy McLEISH: I guess we probably all trawl through the crime stats. Do you have requests from government departments to look into this specifically? When we are looking at perpetrator profiles, for example, and some people have been in contact with the criminal justice system six times or more, do they all have something in common that we could work with as a profile compared to somebody who has only ever had one or two, or age or something like that?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Absolutely. I mentioned very, very briefly in my introductory statement a paper that is published on our website that goes into looking at specific subcategories, if you like, of perpetrators, so we did exactly what you are describing. The team looked at all the different perpetrators we had going through for a period of time and had a look at the distinguishing characteristics that put them in different categories, and I think we came up with eight, from memory.

Cindy McLEISH: Is that the typology—the statistical typology you mentioned?

Fiona DOWSLEY: That is right. That is exactly what that is trying to do: to look at the data and work out where people naturally fall into different kinds of groupings, either because of their characteristics or the characteristics of their behaviours. Sometimes it was more about the characteristic of the victim that was common—victim-survivor. There are a range of different ways of looking at it, but one of the findings from that paper was that, yes, there are some definite segments that you would want to potentially target differently from an intervention perspective. So yes, those analyses can be done, they have been done and it supports that kind of work.

Cindy McLEISH: And those interventionist strategies that are specific and targeted, would you see that they have been rolled out or not?

Fiona DOWSLEY: That is something I am probably not best to speak to. I would leave that to Family Safety Victoria, who administer a lot of the programs, to speak to that.

Cindy McLEISH: Yes, I will ask them that. No worries. You mentioned also that you get data now from a lot of different sources. How many of them have got platforms that are really difficult to interact with yours, because you mentioned I think from Justice it is really quite easy to get the information—because you are probably all on the one platform?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Definitely not on the same platform, no. To be fair, some of our justice systems are 30 years old, so we are taking data out of often very old systems and putting them in a new environment where we can do the things that we need to do. To a certain degree we are fairly agnostic about where the data comes from, so long as we can get it across. But certainly some platforms do tend to have some challenges, either because of the platform itself or the data that is feeding into it, and that can limit what we can do.

Cindy McLEISH: Can limit but not prevent, or can you generally kind of do what you want? I mean, I know you mentioned before about the linkages and things like that.

Fiona DOWSLEY: Yes, there are some challenges. For example, we do have some challenges with some of our IRIS data that we receive.

Cindy McLEISH: With your—sorry?

Fiona DOWSLEY: We get data from a system called IRIS; it is held over in the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing. That is where a lot of the service sector data goes. Because you are getting data feeding into it from lots of different places, quality can be a bit of a challenge. Any time you have lots of different data providers going into a system, it can get a little messy—different interpretations of definitions, variable quality.

Cindy McLEISH: I imagine with all the agencies feeding into the Orange Door that a lot of them, being small, probably have very different skills and platforms to deal with this?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Capabilities are genuinely very differing depending on where you are, absolutely. That said, we have not received our data from the Orange Door yet, so I cannot comment specifically about what they –

Cindy McLEISH: When are you due to receive that?

Fiona DOWSLEY: We are in negotiation with them at the moment. We have just signed our MOU, agreeing to work together, so we have now got to go through the negotiation of exactly how it is going to work from a data receipt perspective.

Cindy McLEISH: Is there a timeframe on that?

Fiona DOWSLEY: As soon as we can get through the conversations. I do not have a specific deadline on it—as soon as we can.

Cindy McLEISH: Okay. I will stop there, Ella. Thanks.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Cindy. Annabelle.

Annabelle CLEELAND: That is good, you asked a few of mine. In your opening remarks you mentioned about the legislative challenges, and then again in response to Ella's question. What are they?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Overall I would say we have actually got quite a good legislative set of arrangements in Victoria. We do have data sharing Acts et cetera. But one area where we run into an actual limit is around Victoria Legal Aid. They have a restriction in their Act in terms of being able to give us identified data, so that is one that we have run into that is very specific. But by and large in terms of the main departments, it is usually not a legislative issue.

Annabelle CLEELAND: Okay. Are there other challenges with groups like St Vincent de Paul with sharing of your information?

Fiona DOWSLEY: There can be, absolutely. The thing about data sharing is it is a bit of a handshake. From our point of view, I can sit there and say, 'Well, I have an enabling function in my legislation to look into this space. I have legitimate reason to collect this information.' The other agency has to be able to work out whether they can legally provide it to you. For some of the non-government agencies I think that can be quite complicated. It will then be an interpretation of whether they have appropriate consent from people and whether they have data collection statements that are in line et cetera. So it very much depends on the agency and how they are set up as to how equipped they are to be able to share information.

Annabelle CLEELAND: Are there any government or non-government agencies whose data you would like to access but because of those restrictions you are unable to, that you could name?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Not that I could specifically name, because we probably would have to go out and have a chat to the next circle out, if you like, in terms of data providers. The database at the moment, in terms of its main sources that it captures, has largely been in place for quite some time. I think you would then be looking at the next group out that we do not regularly receive data from and engaging with them. That might be a more complicated conversation about what they can provide and how.

Annabelle CLEELAND: I will skip to my question 5 on that one. With your analysis through COVID-19 about that higher reporting, what agencies were you using data from that you had not previously that you would like to re-establish that relationship with?

Fiona DOWSLEY: First of all—I do not want to mislead—we actually did not find necessarily the elevated reporting across the board that people were suggesting. But in terms of the sources that we had in there that were in addition to our normal, we did have the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia contribute information. We had some information from the Department of Home Affairs. We had information from 1800RESPECT, which we do not normally receive—that is the federal helpline. Kids Helpline and a number of different helplines that we do not normally receive data from contributed. We had a chat to and got some information from VCAT, which we do not normally include, and an agency called the Lookout. We had information coming through from inTouch and Safe Steps, which we do not normally, and we also had some

data come in from Seniors Rights Victoria. We really cast our net wide to say, 'All right—what are all the different groups that might be affected here and who possibly might have some information they can give us in this particular moment in time just for a short-run project?' It was a range of our normal ones in addition to some of those new sources.

Annabelle CLEELAND: And none of those relationships are ongoing—it was just a one-off?

Fiona DOWSLEY: No, it was very much a point in time. But it is something where we are looking to be able to re-engage with some of them over the next little while to see if we can hook them back in.

Annabelle CLEELAND: Who would be quite critical, with that information that you received, to have an ongoing more formal relationship with for ongoing data?

Fiona DOWSLEY: I think the Family Court is very important. And I think some of the national helplines are interesting as well, because we do have some Victoria-based services and some work on a helpline basis, but that is another entry point for people into the system. So that is probably another one I would like to be able to capture.

Annabelle CLEELAND: You mentioned in terms of opportunities in your opening remarks about the nationally linked data movements. Who is undertaking that, and who is participating?

Fiona DOWSLEY: There are two main assets. The first one that has been developed is the National Disability Data Asset. This is a collaborative project between governments, but it has been particularly led in terms of its implementation by the ABS and AIHW, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. That one is in its early stages of development, but there is an ambition, I believe, for that data asset to include family violence data. That would be a way to enable a range of some of those analyses around particular socio-demographic groups that we do not capture well in our local administrative data, such as people with disability but potentially some of those other groups as well.

The other one is that the ABS have been funded nationally to develop a linked Criminal Justice Data Asset. That will be taking a similar scope to the current national crime and justice statistical collections—so police, courts, corrections—and will be able to link them together, not just as linear systems but also between jurisdictions. For example, we would be able to say, 'Okay, we have these alleged perpetrators who have been recorded in Victoria and we are seeing them pop up in different states and territories'—there is movement or there is not. That would enable an analysis that we cannot currently do.

Annabelle CLEELAND: Okay. That is exciting. Just on Cindy's comment about the MOU with the Orange Door, what information will you be getting from them?

Fiona DOWSLEY: This is what we are currently starting negotiations on. There is a whole scoping conversation that needs to happen about exactly how they are receiving data, what it looks like in their systems and then what makes sense to come across to us and what form that is going to take.

Annabelle CLEELAND: And just finally, we have heard a lot about the tip of the iceberg when it comes to understanding the users of family violence, and you advised about more surveys to capture the potential perpetrators –

Fiona DOWSLEY: It is one option.

Annabelle CLEELAND: One option. Has that occurred before?

Fiona DOWSLEY: In Australia I cannot think of there being a survey focused on alleged perpetrators of family violence or people who use violence in family relationships. There may have been smaller scale studies, but in terms of there being a big national survey, for example, no, I do not think so.

Annabelle CLEELAND: Why?

Fiona DOWSLEY: As I say, historically Australia has leaned more into victim-based surveys. It is a little bit easier, to be honest. There are methodological challenges with engaging successfully with people who are undertaking undesirable behaviours or illegal behaviours just in terms of being able to get an accurate survey

and a sufficiently confidential survey that will get people to disclose what you want them to disclose. It is just not historically where the investment has gone—it has usually been into victimisation surveys. And Australia, compared to some other countries, runs a lot of victimisation surveys.

Annabelle CLEELAND: And have you got an example globally where they have done a survey in this space really successfully that we could model or look at?

Fiona DOWSLEY: I would have to take that on notice about the current state of that around the place. A lot of work that comes from surveys around family violence does tend to be victim based, so I would have to go and check.

Annabelle CLEELAND: Yes, if you could—thank you. That is me for the moment. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Annabelle. Chris.

Chris CREWTHER: Thank you. Firstly, thank you for coming in today and for the chance to speak with you once again.

Fiona DOWSLEY: It's a pleasure.

Chris CREWTHER: We have heard some major concerns in the media and community around youth crime, antisocial behaviour, the age of criminal responsibility and so forth. I am interested in, in the context of our inquiry, are there any different barriers to collecting and using data on adolescent and young people using violence, and how could these be addressed or best addressed?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Such an interesting question. It is an area where we have seen better recording than I think we previously had. We have seen a growing element of that in our crime statistics. Previously it simply was not, I think, acknowledged, but now it is being captured in a much better way in terms of the actual recording of it and there being, I think, better recognition by services of this being an area of need. Yes, it is something we can see in the data. I think there is always a question when it comes to anything involving children around where it gets captured. For example, if you have a child who is being violent in the home, I think there is a question of whether that becomes something that comes to the attention of child protection, if it becomes something that is going through a criminal justice intervention, if it is something that is going through an intervention order or if it is something where people are seeking support for what could be a child with, for example, a significant neurocognitive disability and where they are managing some really complicated behaviours in the home. I think the complexity of those scenarios makes it difficult to know exactly where we will capture them, but we do see a certain amount come through our datasets that are young people using family violence, and we have actually done a couple of research papers on it that are available on our website.

Chris CREWTHER: Just a follow-up as well, following on from some private briefings we had today: do you think more needs to be done through the Orange Door in terms of L17 forms and giving feedback to police and others as to their work and responses and so forth?

Fiona DOWSLEY: I am not sure. Can you expand a little bit on what some of the responses might be?

Chris CREWTHER: You may have some thoughts on that, Cindy, noting you had some concerns around that.

Cindy McLEISH: Well, probably following on with the L17s—the information that the police put into their database: does that come to you?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Yes.

Cindy McLEISH: Always?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Yes.

Cindy McLEISH: So when you are trying to drill down into some of that—like when we had a look at what is on an L17, such as country of birth—that is not information that is readily available through the CSA that I have been able to find in relation to family violence.

Fiona DOWSLEY: Well, we capture what is recorded on the system. I should say we publish a lot of data but we receive more than we publish, so if there is something that is not part of the standard suite of things that we publish, we can probably do it as a data request. The only area where we would not is if there was a significant data quality issue with it. So it is quite possibly –

Cindy McLEISH: Then the L17 should be fine.

Fiona DOWSLEY: Yes, it should be.

Cindy McLEISH: The data quality should be pretty okay.

Fiona DOWSLEY: It should be. It is one of the firmest areas of data recording, for sure. So it is something we could probably do on request; it is just not something we have done as part of our standard outputs.

Chris CREWTHER: And just adding to that, how could the inclusion of data from the Orange Door which includes alleged perpetrators affect the family violence dashboard?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Well, this is the thing—because we are going into this exploratory stage with the Orange Door, we will really have to see what we obtain from there, particularly because the Orange Door is working in a way as kind of a middleman for lots of different datasets and an aggregator of lots of datasets. That is going to be something we are going to have to unpick in how we actually compare and contrast what is going to this part of the sector versus the other parts of the sector. It is too early for me to answer that question. We need to get in there and have a look at exactly what the data flows look like and how we can marry it all up.

Chris CREWTHER: Thank you.

The CHAIR: I will just ask a quick question if I can, Jackson, before I throw to you, just because it relates to this. You mentioned that sometimes you might not publish information if there is an issue with data quality. Are you able to provide us with some examples of where you might run into these issues, or have run into them historically?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Absolutely. A great example would be when we first started publishing our crime stats we did not have much in the way of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander statistics that we were publishing within that, and the reason for that was that at the time, with the way that it was recorded, there was so much missing data that we did not feel like it was necessarily representative, what we could see. Data improvement work occurred with Victoria Police. We got it to a point where the quality was publishable and we started publishing it. That tends to be the issue. The biggest thing that we run into is missing data for a field. For example, say you had a data source and 40% of its country of birth was unknown—at that point, how representative is what is left? You have to ask the question about how reliable that is going to be as a piece of information. Usually the number one thing we are dealing with is missing data.

The CHAIR: And are there any examples at the moment where you think that data quality needs to be improved?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Not that I could pinpoint off the top of my head, and particularly if we are talking about family violence, because as Ms McLeish has pointed out, for the L17 process of Victoria Police the data collection is very good. It is probably the best bit of data collection that we see there, because it is such an actuarial process and so much of the form is just required to be filled out. I think there would probably be some aspects if we were looking to some of that more social services data where you would run into more of the missing data, but off the top of my head I would not like to try and put my finger on a particular variable.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Jackson.

Jackson TAYLOR: Thank you. There has been some discussion about having access built in to more advanced data linkage between service providers and across the spectrum, and there has been some discussion around barriers. Of the barriers that you are aware of in terms of greater data linkages, what are some of the ways you could overcome these?

Fiona DOWSLEY: From our point of view it is simply one of access, primarily. If we can get access to either identified data with personal identifiers attached so we can link it to the person or a statistical linkage key

to serve the same purpose but without the provision necessarily of those identifiers, then we can match pretty much anything together. That is really all it is—just being able to get information at that granular level and with something that we can use to link it back to the person.

Jackson TAYLOR: Is it difficult to start these conversations with different service providers? Is there a best practice way to do this?

Fiona DOWSLEY: There can be some hesitancy that agencies might have about that. For some it is relatively straightforward. For us the biggest challenge we have, particularly around the Family Violence Database, is simply that there has been a long-term precedence of doing it one way, so being able to convince people of the value-add of going that extra step and providing more granular data that they may feel concerned about, that is usually the conversation that needs to be had. And as I mentioned before, there are relatively few where there is a hard and fast barrier. It is often more about the ability to manage a change, because it also means that an agency has to put some resources into redeveloping what they give you and being comfortable with providing data at that level.

Jackson TAYLOR: Sort of in a similar vein, some stakeholders have suggested a centralised data system for adults using family violence or a centralised system for sharing information in the service delivery sector. How would more of that centralised data increase capacity for research and analysis?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Well, certainly if part of the work is done for you in a way, then that might make things a little easier. I think probably if I am imagining what you are talking about correctly, which would be—in fact, let me start there. Let me test that I am imagining this correctly: you are suggesting a data platform where, for example, it might be hosted by government and all service providers use it as a customer relationship management tool rather than getting secondary submission from their own systems into it? Okay. Potentially it would improve the breadth of what you could ask providers to give you, because they are not having to double handle information. You could potentially build in some standardisation, but it is still open to interpretation probably, and also different services do different things, so even though something might look the same in terms of the way it is described, it might qualitatively be different. From that point of view it might help with collation. It would make extraction easier if it was all in one place, but there would probably be a range of pros and cons you would have to think about in doing such a thing, and it would probably be quite expensive.

Jackson TAYLOR: I can imagine implementation would be a key issue.

Fiona DOWSLEY: Scoping and business rules would be challenging, I think, as well. Designing one thing to suit many people's businesses I think would be quite difficult.

Jackson TAYLOR: Just another quick one. I was a bit interested about your discretionary research capability as opposed to commissioned. How do you prioritise your resources to respond promptly to commissioned family violence research requests whilst also maintaining the family violence dashboard?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Okay. I will answer those in reverse, if that is okay. Our family violence database is a funded project. There are a couple of roles that are dedicated to the family violence database. We received budget funding for that a few years ago. That is sort of a separate stream of work. Then we have, as you mentioned, our commissioned projects. So we run a certain amount of our work program on a cost recovery basis, and I alluded in my opening statement to a couple of those projects where other agencies effectively subcontract pieces of work to us and we deliver those. We have a relatively small base footprint. It is responsible for, for example, producing my crime stats outputs every quarter, and we are able to do a small amount of self-directed research. Usually most of the research papers on our website are things that we have done off our own bat. Occasionally they are funded pieces.

In terms of our prioritisation, increasingly we are probably servicing policy development and legislative change development to be able to inform best decision-making. So it is really a matter of what is most urgent and what is possible, so it is always a bit of a balance, and we try and meet as many needs as we can.

Jackson TAYLOR: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Great. Annabelle, do you have a couple more questions?

Annabelle CLEELAND: Yes, three, if I can. One was a missed opportunity because it was a supplement to something you said and I took a while to follow up. About the potential perpetrators and your suggestion about the survey, you said that is just one suggestion. Is that because you are sitting on other suggestions? Do you have more ideas?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Well, it is all the research methods you would throw at any question really. So we are taking, if you like, the easy grab, which is our administrative by-product data, so things that are generated by a system that is already operating, and we are analysing that for most of our core business. You can absolutely try and do surveys. Particularly if you are trying to get population-level estimates, surveys are important because you can make sure that they are representative. But, depending on your question, you might also be well served by using some more qualitative methods to try and get at these things, so particularly some of the real depth questions that people have about people using violence in a family context. It might be direct interviews. It might be being able to develop in-depth case studies. It might be focus groups, if you could get people who would be willing to speak in that area. So there are a range of different techniques you could use. They would all have pros and cons, and some of them would be better for exploring certain questions than others. I think it is a matter of working out what the question is we are trying to answer, and then there are certain methods that would be best placed to answer that.

Annabelle CLEELAND: In regard to requesting an analysis from CSA, who does this? Who can request an analysis or a deep dive into the data?

Fiona DOWSLEY: We run an open data request service. If it is something from our crime statistics, for example, anyone can email and request the crime statistics. They are a dataset that I have control over. We can just do it as a data request. We have regulations. If it is a big data request, we might charge someone, but if it is a little one, we will just try and do it. That is very much an open process. If it is a more significant project, we are usually being commissioned by other government departments or occasionally other agencies, so that is historically the precedent of who tend to be our clients.

Annabelle CLEELAND: With some of the agencies that are more grassroots or community orientated that can say, 'Look, we can see a pattern anecdotally. We are going to lean on CSA to do a deep dive,' is that possible?

Fiona DOWSLEY: It is something we would have to do on a case-by-case basis.

Annabelle CLEELAND: But it has not necessarily occurred.

Fiona DOWSLEY: Not really. Occasionally people have asked for specific things. If we can accommodate it, particularly if it aligns with something we have already got on the go and it is a relatively simple thing to adjust for someone, we try and do that. But no, not too often. I think particularly for the sector they are tending to rely on the databases as probably their main supportive tool.

Annabelle CLEELAND: With the IRIS data from DFFH, what do you access? What is a part of that IRIS data that you are able to utilise?

Fiona DOWSLEY: We have got a range of things we get from there, and I am happy to provide you the full list we get from them on notice. It is primarily looking at a couple of different streams. There is one stream that is around servicing for support services and there is one that is more around men's behaviour change, for example, interventions. We get a range of data around the people and the touchpoints there. It is reasonably limited, but we do get a certain amount through, so I am happy to provide on notice the full list of data items.

Annabelle CLEELAND: Is there data that you believe DFFH would be collecting that you are not able to access?

Fiona DOWSLEY: There may be, but I think the limitations we run into there, they run into as well. I think even looking through a couple of the submissions that people have made to this inquiry, even the service providers are noting, 'We collect all this information, but we are only asked to provide this amount here,' because it is a part of a contract management arrangement for a particular grant or program that is run. That is probably the main limitation that happens there. It is just we can access what they have actually got, and that is limited by the arrangements they have got with their service providers.

The CHAIR: Can I ask a quick follow-up question in relation to Annabelle's. Is there additional data that could potentially be provided, maybe through DFFH into the IRIS system and then to you, if there are some data collection requirements for clients when it comes to their funding contracts with government?

Fiona DOWSLEY: That would be the way that I would address it if I was sitting at DFFH. I will let them speak for themselves, but yes, I would be looking as contracts are being renewed to see if there are improvements that you would want to make. Because anytime you have got a longstanding arrangement, a little bit the same as some of our historical data collection arrangements with people, they are designed based on what was possible at that point in time. I think as we are moving on with the data that people are looking to use, it makes sense to revisit those arrangements and exactly what is reasonable to ask providers to collect. As even the small service providers are increasing the data they do collect to inform their own service, there may be things that can be done that could not before.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Cindy.

Cindy McLEISH: Thank you. I guess this follows on a little bit on some of the questions that we have just had in the last little bit. Is there are lot of noise in the data, like a lot of stuff that you get that you think, 'We could be more targeted—there are too many things that are captured,' or is it all good?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Let us separate two things. I think it is pretty good in terms of most of the information we receive in terms of basic data quality kind of perspectives, like I say, missing data et cetera, wrong data, I think it is not too bad. The areas where we do have the biggest issue do tend to be in those service sector data sources where some of them can be a bit patchy. Absolutely they can just be a little limited by some of those issues. I think in terms of other dimensions of quality, it depends on your perspective to a degree. For example, we take things as they are recorded by the different agencies. Sometimes that is contested, and that could be seen as a quality issue. But purely in terms of ones and zeros and how it is recorded, it is accurate at that time and for that particular intervention or that service that is being provided.

Cindy McLEISH: You have mentioned also you have got 20 years of data. I imagine it has changed a little bit from what you have got now. Does it allow for good comparative analyses, by decade or by every five years?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Sadly no. Before we took on the database in 2015, it was done as a series of standalone collections and produced as a very considerable book basically—it was a big tome. So there were static datasets created for those runs of the database. It is really only from 2015 that we have been collecting the data and we have got that electronically and in a place. We do have challenges sometimes because of the nature of what we are receiving from agencies where it changes year to year, what we get, so it is not necessarily consistent. Again IRIS is one of these where we have had changes year on year about exactly what we receive from them, so being able to put together that long-term time series can be a bit tricky. But, for example, for our base criminal justice data assets, absolutely we can go back to as far as is sensible. For family violence that is about 2012— that is when a Victoria Police code of practice came into effect around family violence, and from then on the data is reasonably consistently collected and it is of good quality. Before then different policy and different –

Cindy McLEISH: So you have got 12 years?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Yes, we have got 12 years of really solid data for the criminal justice system. But yes, some of that other service data can be a little more variable and getting a time series year on year—a bit trickier.

Cindy McLEISH: You mentioned data that is associated with the outcome of a grant—and I hear this from different groups of people who talk to me about when they have to fill out, you know, the final outcomes for the grant. They will say, 'What they ask for doesn't indicate whether we've done a good job or not.' And they say, 'We measure it by X, Y and Z because we know this has worked and this has been a good outcome, but they want something that ticks a box and fits in here,' and it does not always work that way.

Fiona DOWSLEY: I agree with that. And I think that is partly what I was referring to earlier that, you know, when you have got new contracts or contracts coming up, I think that is a really good time for agencies to have that conversation of 'Are we counting widgets of how many things we've done, or are we really looking at effectiveness?' And that is all government service delivery, and that is a maturation of measurement over time.

Cindy McLEISH: And that will be different across each department as well—every agency that you use.

Fiona DOWSLEY: Absolutely. I think it is a universal challenge, particularly when you have got programs that have been running for a period of time, making sure that the metrics by which you are looking at them are up to date.

Cindy McLEISH: Is there any opportunity for longitudinal studies?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Absolutely there is. As I say, we have got all of our criminal justice data for our last 12 years. We use that quite routinely as an internal asset. And leveraging some of the departments elsewhere across Vic government—you know, some of them have got some longitudinal datasets as well that can be used. So we have got pretty good coverage of that going back. The biggest challenge tends to be when you do get those really big practice and policy changes and it kind of breaks your series, but that is something that we deal with in our analysis and it is usually to the good. So it is a good problem to have.

Cindy McLEISH: Thanks.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Cindy. Well, I have got a couple of questions, which I think will wrap us up. Firstly, can you speak to how CSA's relationships with Victorian Government departments and agencies are formalised and if there are ways to increase collaboration that would enhance your research and reporting and analysis capacity?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Yes, absolutely. As I alluded to earlier, at a departmental level I think there is really good cross-portfolio collaboration and we do have a data-sharing environment that is quite enabling and does get used quite frequently between portfolios to do collaborative work. Specifically in terms of our CSA collections, which do tend to be more publicly focused because we are trying to publish data out of those, as I say, we tend to work on an individual agreement with different agencies. So we will have an information-sharing agreement or an MOU between us and the agency who is giving us data, for example, for the Family Violence Database, and that tends to be our main mechanism—with the exception of, for example, Victoria Police data where I have got a legislative instrument that gives me access and a legal right to use that data. So we have got a bit of a mismatch of arrangements that we use, and depending on who we need to work with we use a different mechanism. But overall, I have to say, all the levers are there for a permissive information-sharing environment. I think it tends to be more of a historical reticence that everyone is working through.

The CHAIR: Okay. In your opening statement you spoke about some work you are doing with cross-jurisdictional data, and I am just wondering if you can expand on that a bit more.

Fiona DOWSLEY: Well, this is the data asset I was referring to earlier—so there is the Criminal Justice Data Asset that is being established by the Australian Bureau of Statistics. They have just recently received funding to take it from pilot into implementation. Once operational it is going to take a little bit to develop, but that will enable us to have our Victorian police, courts, corrections data in the ABS with every other state and territory's data in the ABS. They will be able to link it at the person level, and it will enable us to do some of that cross-jurisdictional analysis that at the moment is really hard for us to do. So, for example, if you wanted to understand certain types of criminal offenders and their cross-border offending and if they are appearing in multiple jurisdictions' systems, then we will be able to do that for the first time. But the really beneficial thing I think will be that once we have got all of that data together and linked in the national data infrastructure that ABS have, that potentially gives us the opportunity to explore other federal datasets in particular and be able to put those together. That for me I think is the area of greatest potential advantage for us as a state because it does give us the opportunity to potentially enhance what we cannot see locally, particularly around some of those sociodemographic details. There is a whole lot of work that ABS need to do to get that happening; it is very much at the beginning of the process. But in terms of genuine opportunity to be able to inform policy and be able to inform government decision-making, that is going to be the nextstep change in what we can really achieve.

The CHAIR: Great. That sounds like a really terrific project—really, really good. Some submissions to the inquiry have raised that enhanced data disaggregation on the family violence dashboard could help better understand people who use violence. Are you able to talk to us a bit about how this could be achieved and maybe what some of those barriers are?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Yes, absolutely. The main barrier we have at the moment to being able to do more of that, because we would love to do more of that, is not getting necessarily more granular information from the providers. It is a little bit back to that question of receiving unit record versus receiving effectively aggregated information. If we are receiving information in that aggregated form from a data source, I cannot split it apart any further. I just do not have the raw firmament to do it with. But the more of those sources that we can transition into giving us that unit record data, then we have got more opportunity to do that. That is basically the number one issue. The only other consideration we would have is we do put our data and confidentiality policy over our outputs, because we do not want it to be identifiable. We are very conscious of the fact we are dealing with really sensitive information. We do tend to suppress or confidentialise very small cell counts. If there was a particular disaggregation and it ended up with lots of 1s and 2s, we would want to not put out that information for very obvious reasons. They are really the only two things we are dealing with. If we are talking about granular data that is so granular that it is actually unit record, we would not be putting that out into the public domain. That would be inappropriate. But also we just need to actually obtain it in the first place in that form.

The CHAIR: I do want to raise one point to that, which No to Violence have put up in their submission, which is that:

> The Family Violence Database … reports the Indigenous status of people using violence but does not disaggregate the ethnicity of men who perpetuate family violence against Indigenous women.

This is something that Djirra have also highlighted in their submission to this inquiry, and it fails to challenge that there is a false assumption that most family violence perpetrated against First Nations women is perpetrated by First Nations men, whereas practice evidence suggests that a significant proportion of this violence is perpetrated by non-Indigenous men. Is that something that you could potentially address through your data and your dashboards? Do you need additional data to be able to do that?

Fiona DOWSLEY: No. I would have to look for some of the data sources we obtain from other agencies, but certainly in terms of our data we get from Victoria Police, I know, because I have looked at it, that when we look at a family instance—and the language of the L17 is an affected family member who is Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and the other party who is non-Indigenous—it is about half, so it is about 50–50. We can do those breakdowns. That is something we can do from our existing information. So yes, happy to look at it.

The CHAIR: Okay. Thank you. Chris.

Chris CREWTHER: Thank you very much. I asked this question at a private briefing earlier, but I am interested in: are you concerned about the current state budgetary situation when it comes to the services offered by the Crime Statistics Agency, particularly when it comes to data around family violence? And are there any particular areas of budgetary investment that may assist you in your work to expand outcomes in that area?

Fiona DOWSLEY: As I semi-flippantly answered earlier, I have the kind of work where you can invest as much as you like and we will just do more. Absolutely, if we were to receive more investment, we could absolutely do more. We could do more research papers. We could publish more. We could accelerate some of that data acquisition work around more detailed datasets et cetera. So we absolutely welcome investment. We have a long to-do list and lots of things that we could achieve with it, for sure.

Chris CREWTHER: Do you feel there is an underinvestment at the moment in terms of what you actually need to do the basic work?

Fiona DOWSLEY: We can do the basic work. In terms of my legislative KPIs, we are putting out crime stats every quarter; we are refreshing our family violence database every year. In terms of doing our base BAU work, we absolutely can achieve that. We deliver that now. It is more, as a lot of your questions have mentioned, that there is a very long list of things that we could look at and things that people would be interested in us doing more of. We could infinitely expand that depending on resource levels. So I think we are getting the BAU done, but there is always room to do more if more resources come our way

Chris CREWTHER: No worries. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Are there any further questions from Committee Members? Cindy.

Cindy McLEISH: Just a quick one about young people and those under 18 as perpetrators. You see there are a lot of kids quite young that are perpetrators of all sorts of things. Do you have much data on them? Do you collect it by age, and are there any barriers?

Fiona DOWSLEY: No. We collect all our data by age. It is one of the variables that is across pretty much every service. It is one of the really basic ones. Yes, absolutely.

Cindy McLEISH: So you can collect it for any age. It is all good.

Fiona DOWSLEY: Yes. Particularly for justice data, absolutely that is not a problem. I am trying to think if there are any of the services where we do not get that, but I think pretty much everyone gives us age.

Cindy McLEISH: Lovely. Thanks.

The CHAIR: Fiona, while we have got you, is there anything else that you would like to add to this conversation today?

Fiona DOWSLEY: Not really. I think we have covered lots of things—and thank you so much for your questions. I think the main thing for me, having looked at this space for about 20 years, is just from a data perspective I always think of it in terms of what is reasonable to ask our administrative by-product data to tell us and what we do need to look at other sources to answer. Because of the nature of family violence—and the nature of crime full stop, to be honest; it applies to all of the things that I tend to look at—there is always a certain amount of it 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. That is probably just in closing. It is a never-ending challenge, but what we try and do with both the data that we produce but also the analysis that we release is to make the most of it that we can and make clear those limitations so people can make their own judgements.

The CHAIR: Thank you for appearing here today and for your contribution to the inquiry. The Committee greatly appreciates the time and effort taken to prepare your evidence for us today.

We will now take a short break before we hear from our next witness.

Witness withdrew.