T R A N S C R I P T

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria

Melbourne—Monday 12 August 2024

MEMBERS

Ella George – Chair
Annabelle Cleeland – Deputy Chair
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Chris Crewther
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Meng Heang Tak
Jackson Taylor

WITNESSES *(via videoconference)*

Professor Michael Flood, Centre for Justice, Queensland University of Technology; and

Dr Hayley Boxall, Research Fellow, College of Arts and Social Sciences, Australian National University.

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

I begin by acknowledging the traditional owners of the land 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 and extend that respect to First Nations people across Victoria.

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

The Committee recognises that evidence given to this inquiry may be distressing, and we 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.

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 am now pleased to welcome Professor Michael Flood, Professor at the Queensland University of Technology Centre for Justice, and Dr Hayley Boxall, Research Fellow at the Australian National University College of Arts and Social Sciences. Michael and Hayley, I invite you to make an opening statement, and this will be followed by questions from members. Thank you.

Michael FLOOD: Thank you. Hayley and I had agreed that I would go first. Thank you for the privilege of addressing this forum. I want to acknowledge first that I am on the lands of the Turrbal and Jagera people up here in Brisbane, and I acknowledge their struggles for justice.

I wanted to start with the maths: 1.6 million women and over half a million men in Australia have experienced violence from a partner. Given those numbers, it must be true that large numbers of people are also the perpetrators of that violence. We know remarkably little about who is perpetrating that violence. There is no state or national data on people's perpetration of domestic or sexual violence. While we have got good data on violence victimisation; we know far less about perpetration.

Think about police and administrative sources. 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 overpolicing 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.

A third stream of data, however, is self-report data—for example, surveys in which people report on their own use of violent behaviours, and that is a well established and increasingly promising way to collect data on perpetration. Self-report data may be bad or good. Some domestic violence studies only ask people if they or their partner have ever committed any of a series of physically aggressive acts. Better studies also ask about the frequency and severity of violence, a wider range of physical and non-physical behaviours, their impacts, their intent, whether the acts were in self-defence, the use of coercive control and so on. Focusing on sexual violence, the best self-report studies use behaviourally specific measures. They do not ask people, 'Have you ever raped somebody?' They ask about a range of sexual acts and about tactics or methods of coercion to obtain them. For example, they might ask, 'Have you ever had sexual intercourse with a woman when she did not want to by overwhelming her with continual arguments and pressure?' Very few men will report that they have raped a woman, but sizeable proportions will report using one or more of the coercive methods included in

these studies. So we need data. 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.

I want to note three things about surveying people—asking people about their own use of violence. First, self-report studies are feasible. Substantial proportions of people will report their own use of violence, particularly if asked questions about specific behaviours. And there is evidence that in fact people's reports of perpetration are at least as reliable as people's reports of victimisation as captured in, for example, the personal safety survey. Second, self-report studies are ethical. There is growing experience in measuring perpetration, and there are established protocols for conducting this research safely and ethically. Third, these studies are impactful. Similar studies of violence perpetration in other countries have had significant impacts, with take-up of findings by policymakers and professionals and impacts too on community norms. We need well-designed methods that capture the character, breadth, severity, impact and context of violence perpetration. We need to look at the diversity of perpetrators and perpetration, and we need information about the risk factors that feed into perpetration and the protective factors that make it less likely. Without that kind of information, we are sort of struggling in the dark. We do not know where best to target intervention against perpetration or where to intervene early, and we do not know whether Australia's efforts to reduce the use of violence are making progress.

The perpetration project is a national research project on the perpetration of violence in intimate, domestic and family settings. It is a collaboration between my university, the Equality Institute, Good Shepherd and the University of New South Wales. As people on the panel may know, we recently received funding from ANROWS to conduct a perpetration survey. The perpetration survey will be a representative survey of the New South Wales population comprising a weighted sample of 2, 000 men, women and people of other genders aged 16 years and older. Our plan is that it will make five key contributions to preventing and reducing domestic, family and sexual violence—DFSV. It will provide vital knowledge on violence by mapping who uses violence, why, when, how and where. It will guide prevention and reduction efforts, including interventions for those using or at risk of using DFSV. It will provide a third key benchmark for measuring progress in reducing DFSV alongside the two we have on violence victimisation and on community attitudes. Fourth, it will change the framing by bringing perpetrators into view, naming their behaviour as the defining problem and shifting the burden off victims. Fifth, it will identify protective factors that make the use of violence less likely.

My final two comments. It is time to reframe the problems of domestic, family and sexual violence such that the individuals perpetrating violence are both more visible and more accountable. 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. Thanks.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Michael. Over to you, Hayley.

Hayley BOXALL: Good afternoon, everyone. I would also like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which I am dialling in from, which are the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples. I pay my respects to their elders past, present and emerging and extend my respects to any Indigenous peoples who are in the room with us today.

Thank you so much for inviting me to attend these proceedings. I have worked in the DFV space for over 10 years now and have over this period of time conducted numerous research projects exploring the nature and characteristics of people who perpetrate domestic, family and sexual violence. Throughout my career I have continually been surprised by the inadequacy of data holdings that we have in Australia, but this is not just an Australian problem—it is an international problem about people who use DFSV, in particular as noted by Professor Flood, the lack of data we have about people who use abusive behaviours but may not come to the attention of the police. I could spend all day talking about DFV perpetrator data in Australia but for the sake of time I will focus on two key areas of needs in Australia: longitudinal datasets and desistance research specifically.

Longitudinal datasets involve the collection of information about the same cohort of people at different intervals in time. Longitudinal datasets are important because they tell us something about causation—what factors contribute to the onset and escalation of abusive behaviours: what comes first, the chicken or the egg? There have been a lot of discussions within the sector about what we know contributes to DFV—the primary drivers and underlying causes—but much of this data is based on cross-sectional datasets. Although cross-sectional datasets can tell us a lot about DFV perpetration and are a valuable piece of the puzzle, including telling us about the characteristics of perpetrators, they are less well placed to tell us about causation. In Australia we do not have the right kinds of datasets to answer the questions that we have: why do some people start using behaviours while others do not? The collection of longitudinal data is also important because it tells us about the importance of transitions from one state to another in the perpetration of abuse; for example, our transition into our first serious relationship, parenthood and so on and so forth. For example, one of the key policy questions that we had during the COVID-19 pandemic was whether domestic and family violence increased as a result of the pandemic. While I was working at the Australian Institute of Criminology we did two surveys of over 25,000 women in Australia which demonstrated that a significant proportion of those had experienced intimate partner violence during the first 12 months of the pandemic. Our primary measure of the impact of the pandemic was whether or not they had experienced first-time abuse or whether the abuse had escalated in frequency and severity since the start of the pandemic. Although these were very useful proxy measures for the impact of the pandemic on changes in patterns of abuse, they were not perfect, and they were subject to limitations because we were effectively building the plane as we were flying it.

The pandemic is an extreme but not isolated event that demonstrates the importance of capturing time-sensitive information to understand what contributes to risk of perpetration across the life course. Other life events and factors that could be explored using longitudinal datasets that we currently are having debates around include things like exposure to extreme misogynistic content online, natural disasters and so on and so forth.

So far I have spoken about the benefit of longitudinal datasets for helping us to understand risk, but picking up on a point that Professor Flood made about the benefits of his perpetrators study in terms of looking at protective factors, one of the key questions that longitudinal datasets can tell us about is who stops. Which perpetrators of abuse go on to stop using these behaviours against their family members and intimate partners, and what contributes to these processes? There is a commonly held belief within the community and sector that 'once an abuser, always an abuser', but actually this is not supported by evidence from longitudinal studies conducted internationally. Those studies have found that a significant proportion of men who use violent behaviours do stop. These findings are consistent regardless of whether we are asking the perpetrator or the victim themselves. But we know very little, actually basically nothing, about why these men stop. Although there is a whole body of criminological research that explores desistance—the processes through which people involved in offending stop or reduce their offending—this research has largely ignored domestic, family and sexual violence to date.

This body of evidence is crucial considering the overwhelming evidence that what we are doing is not 'working' to keep victim-survivors safer from further abuse. The reason I put 'working' in inverted commas is because I think that we need to do a broader piece of work around what we actually think success looks like within this space and really the feasibility of brief intervention programs like men's behaviour change to bring about desistance in isolation from broader support networks and system reforms. But 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. Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: Thank you both, Michael and Hayley, for those excellent opening statements. The first thing I would like to ask you about is with regard to population-based surveys. It is certainly something that has come up throughout this inquiry so far, with multiple stakeholders recommending a population-based survey to better understand the prevalence of perpetration of family violence. I have got a few questions here, so I will go through them one by one.

In your experience, are different surveys needed to understand the volume or prevalence of people using family violence compared to the characteristics and profiles of people using family violence?

Michael FLOOD: That is a great question, and to sort of get down to the practicalities of it, our plan is to ask people 20 minutes worth of questions, because all the advice we have got and other people have given is that in these kinds of nationally representative surveys, whether it is the national community attitudes survey or the personal safety survey or other kinds of things, really you cannot ask much more time than that—20 to 25 minutes. But in that amount of time I do think it is possible to do two kinds of things: to collect detailed data on the extent and character of people's use of a range of forms of violence—violence against partners, sexual violence against others—and to know something about both physical and non-physical behaviours as part of that, so, for example, to be able to assess the extent to which they are using coercive control against an intimate partner. Do that piece of work and know something about who they are—their demographics, their gender, their age, their ethnicity, their class background and in fact know about a third set of factors as well: know, for example, about whether they grew up with violence themselves as children, whether they would be subject to other kinds of trauma or have mental health conditions or have issues with harmful drug and alcohol abuse and to know a little bit at least about their attitudes to gender and violence. So it is absolutely a balancing act, and there are hard limits on how long you can ask people questions for. I cannot remember exactly how you phrased your question, but I think it is possible to do both those things, at least to some substantial extent.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Hayley BOXALL: Just to kind of add on to that, I have developed numerous surveys that do try to do everything, and you start with your ginormous wish list but certain things do have to get sacrificed. It might be that you sacrifice a measure of frequency of abuse or basically the breadth of behaviours, but ultimately it comes down to your research questions in terms of your prioritisation. The COVID-19 survey that we did that was funded by ANROWS was extensive in the sense of it collected a lot of information not only about the victim-survivors but the partner perpetrating abuse, and that still was about 20 minutes. So I think that you would actually be quite surprised how much you can actually ask people within that window.

The CHAIR: Thank you. The next question I have is: what are the challenges when conducting population-based surveys to better understand the volume or profiles of people using violence, and how can those challenges be overcome?

Michael FLOOD: Good question. One challenge that I think the community assumes but is not the case is that people will not report on their own use of violence. There is actually now a substantial body of scholarship, including multicountry studies, large-scale national studies and so on and in fact no fewer than four or five Australian studies asking people about perpetration—the recent Man Box survey, the very recent Australian Institute of Criminology survey on sexual violence, earlier pieces on child sexual abuse perpetration and image-based sexual abuse perpetration. All those studies have shown that people will report on the use of behaviours that are stigmatised, that are undesirable and that are even criminal. They will report if they are assured of confidentiality and privacy, if they are not going to be subject to legal sanction for the behaviours they report and if you ask them questions in less stigmatising ways, using the kind of the behaviourally specific language that I described.

Certainly you have got a generic challenge in any kind of survey research of social desirability bias and under-reporting, but the evidence is that is no more significant in research on perpetration than it is on research on victimisation by the kind of dimensions of violence. I just want to check your question. The question was about the challenges in doing population-based research on perpetration, is that right?

The CHAIR: That is right, yes.

Michael FLOOD: Good question; I do not have a scripted answer for this. The second obvious challenge is what you then do with the data. We had—what was it, two weeks ago?—the Australian Institute of Criminology data on sexual violence perpetration, and it showed that significant proportions of men and in fact not trivial proportions of women had perpetrated sexual violence. It is politically delicate and can be fraught to figure out how to report on those findings well, particularly when it comes to questions of class or ethnicity or indeed gender. There is a lot of discomfort among some men in the community about the growing attention to violence by men against women and so on. So I think there is a kind of practical and programming challenge in

how one reports responsibly and carefully on this research, but it is not a new challenge. For example, the national community attitude survey—I have been on the technical advisory or expert reference groups for the national community attitude survey for some years. There are the same kind of tensions. How do we report on different levels of tolerance, for example, for marital rape among some ethnic communities compared to others? Again, I think that is a challenge, but it is a challenge that is possible to handle in constructive and careful ways.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Hayley, would you like to add anything there?

Hayley BOXALL: Yes. I think my contribution would be around the sampling design more than anything else. Increasingly there is, I guess, tension between non-probability and probability samples. It is a very methodologically wonky argument to make, but there is an increasing shift to online delivery methods and the use of online research panels. When we were trying to do the COVID-19 pandemic surveys, there was no option for the PSS. The reason that we did it was because the PSS, the interviewers, could not actually get into people's homes, and they could not diverge from their strict methodological protocols to do that survey because it was not safe for them to do that. Increasingly you do see online research panels and online administration methods. It is how you manage that alongside the digital divide—the recognition that there are still going to be communities who cannot participate in these surveys because they are impacted by the digital divide and how you reconcile that. It is something that we have had to deal with quite recently with our survey that we are developing for the Queensland Law Reform Commission, about how we get a sense of community when not all sections of the community are equally able to participate in the survey.

There is a very big, important question to be answered about 'Do you want something timely?' in the sense of 'Are you trying to do this every couple of years?' in which case probability samples may not be feasible. But then if you want to go down the non-probability sample path, it is about ensuring that it is as methodologically rigorous as possible, because it has to stand that public scrutiny in terms of you have to be able to stand behind the figures that come through as part of it. That is just in the last five years or so, the use of online research panels and non-probability samples, and there is some really useful scholarship around it in terms of how it is not very different at all from the general community. But that is I think a very methodologically tricky one to unpack.

Michael FLOOD: Just to quickly add a comment there—sorry, I am sure that the panel has questions—just on online panels, the national community attitudes survey itself trialled online sampling strategies as part of its most recent survey, which I think was in the field last year. That is what is happening. We are not ringing landlines anymore, because they are increasingly rare, so there is a shift to online methods in general for prevalence surveys. In terms of the four studies I mentioned that have collected data on different forms of violence perpetration in Australia, all of those use online panel methods. People have done comparisons of the extent to which people will disclose stigmatising or stigmatised behaviour in online panels compared to telephone surveys and compared to face-to-face surveys, and online panels do at least as well. They do at least as well in terms of levels of disclosure or sometimes better, and participants in those methods show similar or higher levels of comfort with their participation. So at this point it seems to me that methodologically there are good reasons to shift to using online panels for this and for other kinds of research like this.

The CHAIR: Thank you. How regularly should population-based surveys be conducted?

Michael FLOOD: I will have a go at this, but again these are great questions I do not have scripted answers to. I look at the NCAS and I look at the personal safety survey, and I think something like every three or four years. I think, again, there is a kind of pragmatic issue there. You want to do it frequently enough that you will capture significant changes, population-level changes. Anyway, given the very recent debates about effectiveness of primary prevention efforts, about trends in rates of intimate partner homicide and so on, it seems to me that less frequently than about every four years starts to be a problem. However, I think that is about as frequently as one could justify economically.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Hayley BOXALL: I have a slightly different view. I think it all just comes down to what the purpose of the survey is. If it is to track trends over time, having that 12-month prevalence estimate as a measure of how we are doing as a nation, then every four years is kind of what you would expect to see. Anything that is shorter

you will not necessarily see any meaningful change, so a lot of money will go towards showing that not much has changed. If your aim is to inform policy and practice, then it needs to happen more regularly than that, because oftentimes it is the question of the day. This is a constantly evolving space, and every four years is probably not frequently enough to be able to address some of the policy questions that governments would have. I do not know how you balance those, but that has always been our tension with using something like the personal safety survey—(a) we cannot change the methodology but also (b) it is not timely enough for us to be able to get some answers to some of the more time sensitive questions.

The CHAIR: My last question on this is: in the absence of a national population-based survey, would you recommend that the Victorian Government undertakes one?

Michael FLOOD: I can speak to that. Absolutely. I think in a simple sense the more the merrier. But beyond that, there may be differences in patterns of domestic, family and sexual violence across states and territories, so I do not think we can assume that New South Wales-based data from our survey of 2000 people in New South Wales necessarily will apply in other states and territories. I think having data for a greater number of states and territories per se is useful, and then I think having data that Victorian-based policymakers and advocates and others can point to for its state or territory also has policy and community value in terms of being able to argue for the relevance of that data rather than being able to dismiss it as 'New South Wales has a problem; here in Victoria we don't have these kinds of things'. I think in terms of the policy impact of this kind of data, having it for one's own state and territory is valuable. And then in terms of knowing about prevalence, I think scaling up has obvious advantages.

The CHAIR: Thanks.

Hayley BOXALL: I agree with Michael on that one. I think there is always value in conducting your own survey. I think one of the benefits of not doing a national survey is that you can make it fit for purpose in terms of what you want it to do, as opposed to having to meet the needs of an aggregate level, because the jurisdictions are so different in terms of where they are at in thinking about what they need to know about perpetrators. I would say that Victoria is probably a bit more advanced than some of the other jurisdictions, so what you might want from a survey could look quite different to what another jurisdiction would want.

Michael FLOOD: Having said that, my aspiration is that we design a survey instrument—we are starting to work on it now—that could be used in any state and territory in Australia, and I do not think that the understandings of, for example, coercive control or other forms of violence are so radically different in different states and territories that we could not do that. Yes, what counts as legislation will look different in some states and territories, but I think there is a broad enough consensus around the different forms of violence we might want to collect data on that we can design an instrument for the New South Wales survey that could happily be deployed in other states and territories. That is certainly our goal.

The CHAIR: Great. Annabelle.

Annabelle CLEELAND: Thank you. Dr Flood, your name has come up quite a few times throughout the hearing, so you are a bit of a rock star in this space, I think we are hearing. Thanks for joining.

Michael FLOOD: I will cringe at that, but thank you.

Annabelle CLEELAND: I just wanted to ask: what are the challenges to accessing and analysing criminal data to inform research, and also are there any legislative barriers in Victoria that might exist in this space?

Michael FLOOD: Just to abandon and disprove my rockstar status, I do not know a lot about the first question. I have not looked closely at what kinds of criminal data may be relevant. My colleagues in the perpetration project have. Lula Dembele and Jozica Kutin at UNSW know much more about that. They co-authored a submission on behalf of Good Shepherd, and in fact both are involved in the perpetration survey. It is not my area of expertise, so I might defer to Hayley's expertise on that.

On the second question—what was your second question again, sorry?

Annabelle CLEELAND: Just any legislative barriers that you see. I asked it about Victoria, but you did mention that there is terminology, policy and legislation that varies between states and federally. So if there is

any suggestion of what should be streamlined to address some of the data sharing and research in this space better, that would be excellent to understand.

Michael FLOOD: Yes, okay. Just to speak to one issue, one issue is around mandatory reporting. We were lucky to be able to draw on Jesuit Social Services' experience with the Man Box survey, because they were asking young men aged 18 to 30 about the perpetration of various forms of partner violence, and their advice—and as far as we can tell, for New South Wales and other states and territories too—was that asking people about the use of partner and sexual violence in the perpetration survey does not meet the conditions for mandatory reporting for a number of reasons. One is that people are not disclosing crimes as such—they are not talking about particular incidents and they are not naming particular individuals against who they use those behaviours—and neither the researchers nor the panel providers have any way of tying data back to the individual respondents or victims and so on, so it does not meet the legal view of what counts as disclosure of a crime. Also, for police in New South Wales, it does not meet mandatory reporting requirements around how you need to know or believe that a serious indictable offence has been committed by another person. Again we might know who the perpetrators are and we might know who the victims are and of any specific incidents. One concern people have had is around reporting and crime disclosure, but as far as we can tell, and certainly from Jesuit Social Services and other people's experience, that will not be a barrier across the country. Hayley, do you want to speak to that first question?

Hayley BOXALL: I have analysed crime data from Victoria and published a few papers based on the analysis of that data. As a general principle, most of the states and territories now have an ethics process managed by police agencies to access crime data. Victoria has that within their infrastructure as well, so if you want to get access to the data, you have to go through their data custodian process, which includes an ethics process. But actually I have found that Victoria Police has one of the most accessible datasets of the crime agencies around Australia, primarily I feel because they are not adequately resourced to respond to data requests but they will respond to them, whereas with other jurisdictions basically they have to find internal resourcing to support your data request. If the New South Wales police do not find a home for it, in terms of a local area command who are willing to support the project and do that data extraction for you, then you do not get access to the data. So at least with Victoria Police, as long as you have your appropriate ethics processes and they agree that it is something that they should be doing, then they are accessible.

In terms of the quality of the data that you get, it is actually very rich, because they not only differentiate between intimate partner violence and family violence—which is something that is not consistent across the jurisdictions but is a really important point of distinction, which I have found through my own research—but also they have a lot of the risk assessment data within their data management system, so they can provide that information as well as well as all the information they extract as part of the L17 report that Victoria Police have to complete as part of any domestic and family violence process. It takes a long time to get that data, but it is probably one of the more accessible datasets across Australia. It would just be nice if you could get it in a more timely fashion. The last time I sought a data extract from them it took about 12 months. That was a very long time, but I knew I was getting it, whereas with other police agencies it is not really clear whether you are even going to get a data extract at the end of the process.

Annabelle CLEELAND: We have looked at a lot of the points in the system that perpetrators or users of family violence might be seen, and it was disclosed that our Orange Door referral system is not including sexual violence. Do you think that that could be an opportunity to strengthen our dataset when it comes to research but also data sharing amongst victim-survivors, Hayley?

Hayley BOXALL: I think that sexual violence is definitely low-hanging fruit. I have just done some work for Queensland's Domestic and Family Violence Death Review and Advisory Board, and they have been looking at sexual violence within the context of intimate partner homicides. It is something that is disclosed but not necessarily reported to the police as a formal report, but it is disclosed to service providers and things like that. It is a really strong risk factor for intimate partner homicide, but more importantly it is actually a really important risk factor, because unlike other forms of risk factors like non-fatal strangulation and things like that, sexual coercive behaviour occurs throughout the life course of a relationship. So it is a very early risk marker of potential lethality risk even years down the track.

I think that intimate partner sexual violence is only something that we have started to really engage with as an idea. Certainly from the reviews that I have done, service providers do feel a bit icky about recording that

information. They do not feel confident having those conversations with victim-survivors and perpetrators. I think that there is definitely a broader system piece to be done to encourage not only those conversations to be had in the first place but recording that information and including it as part of datasets.

Michael FLOOD: Just two comments, very much endorsing what Hayley said—the perpetration survey does plan to collect data on sexual violence perpetration, including non-partner sexual violence. But I wanted to say there were two questions that I do not feel that I answered particularly well earlier. I would love to get those on notice. One was about crime data, and the other was about terminology or language in the legislation, I believe. If it is possible to take those on notice, that would be great.

Annabelle CLEELAND: Yes. No worries. And I guess in closing, you have both referenced quite a few pieces of research or reporting that you have been involved in, so if there is anything that you think is relevant to us in Victoria, could you please provide it to us as well?

I will hand it on to my colleague.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Annabelle. Christine.

Chris COUZENS: Thank you both for your contribution today. We really appreciate your time. What do you think is the best way to undertake research on young people using family violence or using violence? What do you think is the best approach?

Michael FLOOD: Hayley, it looks like you are about to speak.

Hayley BOXALL: No. I will follow on from you, Michael. You have done more work.

Michael FLOOD: Dammit, fine. Look, as for perpetration in general, I think that you want to do a range of things. Prevalence data is useful, and I know that work by Kate Fitz-Gibbon and others at Monash gives us some idea of the extent of young people's use of family violence—often, for example, boys' and young men's violence against their mothers but other forms of adult and family violence as well. So you want prevalence data. I think you want qual data as well that involves much more close focus data from among particular cohorts of individuals who are at risk of or already using domestic family violence—so adolescents, for example, who are at risk of or already using domestic and family violence. The perpetration survey as a kind of state-based survey or ideally a national survey—we would very much want to complement that with other forms of qual data that generate the kind of rich understandings that quantitative data cannot necessarily. That is a very broad answer. I will hand on to Hayley.

Hayley BOXALL: I was part of the work that Michael just referenced with Kate Fitz-Gibbon. We did a survey of 5000 young people across Australia, 16 to 20 years old, and we asked them about their experiences of witnessing and being a target of family violence but also perpetrating family violence. We found that 20% did admit to using violence in the home. But I also know that Elena Campbell at RMIT has been funded by ANROWS to do some further work in this space to look at prevalence estimates and those kinds of things.

There is always a tension with doing surveys with young people, particularly young men and boys, as they are much more difficult to engage in online surveys. Whenever I have done a survey, we have always been told, 'You need to make it as short as possible, because young men do not complete surveys.' So there is always that kind of tension. Again, it is a very methodological kind of wonky question, but if you are looking at doing something like a survey, a lot of the online research panels that we have used to do this kind of research require parental consent for young people to participate in the survey, and so there has been an unanswered question for us in terms of: does that limit disclosures, limit the participation of young people who maybe are using these behaviours? Because we know from research that parents who are subjected to these types of abuse feel very deep-seated feelings of shame, and if they are experiencing these behaviours, they may not want their children and young people to participate in those types of surveys.

I think the other piece of the puzzle is that beyond the prevalence kind of thing there is a need for a broader body of research about understanding pathways into young people's use of violence beyond just looking at their experiences as victims themselves. I think that that is a really big piece of the puzzle that we have not got yet and something that would be answered through something like a longitudinal study or doing something like a qualitative research study. So I think that kind of pathway work is really, really important. But it is feasible—

young people do participate in surveys. Michael and I have both done surveys involving young people who have been asked these difficult questions, but there are just some additional methodological things that we need to be mindful of, particularly around parental consent.

Chris COUZENS: Great. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thanks. Chris.

Chris CREWTHER: I will let Cindy go first.

The CHAIR: Cindy, over to you. Thank you.

Cindy McLEISH: Thank you. Hayley, you have mentioned a couple of things that completely grabbed me, because I am a total believer in longitudinal studies and you talked about longitudinal datasets. What datasets do you think we need, and who should get it? Who should we get to get that information for us?

Hayley BOXALL: So the longitudinal datasets that we need, I think we need something bespoke; I think we actually do need something that starts from scratch. So there are a number of other longitudinal panel studies that are looking at options for including perpetration and victimisation of DFV as an additional kind of add-on to existing studies. This is some work that has been done by the Australian Institute of Family Studies and things like that, and I think that is fantastic, but I think that our understanding of pathways into domestic and family violence is so nascent that we need something bespoke that can answer some very specific questions that we have that may not be generally addressed through like a general health survey.

In terms of who should do it, I think that—you have put me on the spot. My immediate instinct is something like the Australian Institute of Family Studies, just because they do have that credibility in the sense that they do a lot of this work already. Having said that, I would like to see someone with domestic and family violence expertise doing this work as well. So you could be looking at actually having a bespoke collection housed at a discrete university or like the Australian Institute of Criminology. I am honestly not sure. I think that would be a scoping exercise in terms of where it best sits.

Cindy McLEISH: That is okay, because I am aware that there is so much data that is out there but not the longitudinal data and not the qualitative data as well. Can you clarify, and either of you might be able to answer this—we talked about online surveys and online studies: are they done face-to-face online or are they a survey completed anonymously online?

Hayley BOXALL: A survey is primarily anonymously online, however there are different research panels and survey administrators that do have a component where they might administer it to a smaller cohort just as a way of kind of making sure that they are including people who may not have access to the internet and things like that—but primarily online and anonymous. I am not sure about your experiences, Michael.

Michael FLOOD: No, the same. So with the perpetration survey, for example, most of those 2000 people will be responding via a computer screen or an iPad or a phone. However, we will also be consulting, for example, with Indigenous communities about the extent to which we will need to tailor recruitment methods, and it may be that we look at other kinds of methods including mobile phone sampling or indeed face-to-face methods to pick up on communities that may be more poorly served by online methods.

Cindy McLEISH: So when you are talking about this, you are looking at large pools of people where you are finding this data out as a result of the general questions. How do we get to those that are specific to this cohort, the perpetrators that we want? So if you are getting the national attitude survey or something like that, you are getting a whole bunch of people completing it, and you find that there are people that have used intimate partner violence or a little bit more of coercion. How do we nail into that group in the first instance?

Michael FLOOD: Hayley, do you want to respond?

Hayley BOXALL: I was going to say you are looking at a different sampling method in the sense of—I mean, in terms of longitudinal studies there have been some really fascinating longitudinal studies that have picked up people who have been incarcerated for specific offences, so people who have been proceeded against and charged with domestic and family violence offences. There have been some US-based longitudinal studies that have picked up people who have been reported to the police for those offences and then followed them in

terms of looking at the longer-term kind of criminal careers, histories and those kinds of things. But, yes, as soon as you get into that kind of thing where you are only looking for people who are perpetrators it is a very different kind of thing that you are looking to do. It is still really, really valuable and tells you really, really important things, but I am thinking with a longitudinal study if you pick up just the general community the benefit of that is that you can also pick up people who are at higher risk for perpetrating behaviours but do not go on to do those behaviours, and so you can look at resilience—those protective factors that Michael was talking about—as well.

Cindy McLEISH: Thank you very much.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Cindy. Jackson.

Jackson TAYLOR: Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much both for your opening statements today and for answering our questions. My question is: the ANROWS website notes about Dr Flood's research grant that:

> The project aims to use New South Wales … as a model to begin building a comprehensive national profile of DFSV perpetration.

What are the next steps after the New South Wales model to build a comprehensive national profile of perpetration?

Michael FLOOD: Good question. I think it is funding actually. It feels crass to talk about funding, but funding probably makes the difference. For example, we had an expression of interest from the ACT after I presented to the ACT Domestic Violence Prevention Council. They were saying what would it take to extend recruitment to the ACT. Really it is just a matter of extending the cost because it costs money to recruit people via online samples, as it does to recruit anybody. You pay them for their time, you pay the panel provider for the work it does in reaching out to those people and so on. But as I have said, we aspire to develop an instrument that can be used across states and territories, so I think it is funding and political will that makes the difference, rather than particular methodological questions.

Jackson TAYLOR: Thank you. Just a quick follow-up: are there any other interstate or international jurisdictions that have done surveys like this that could be used as an ideal model?

Michael FLOOD: Yes, but not necessarily as an ideal model. So, for example, there was a national UK survey of male university students that was interesting in terms of its scale but was more limited in terms of its breadth. There is a UN multicountry study among six countries in the Asia-Pacific that was a study among 10,000 men in those six countries with really striking findings about their use of domestic and sexual violence, but it was conducted face to face, which is just not feasible in Australia, and in a very different context in terms of levels of violence in those countries. So there are certainly models of how to ask people about their use of violence and how to do so at scale, but none that are quite importable into the Australian context, so I think this actually will be world leading in some ways and even just the New South Wales survey I think will develop a model that can be scaled for other countries. In fact a colleague of mine who is involved in domestic and sexual violence work in Canada is coming over in November really to pick our brains about doing something similar in Alberta if not more broadly in Canada.

Jackson TAYLOR: Wonderful. Thank you very much. Thank you, Chair. Chris.

Chris CREWTHER: Thank you very much for your evidence today. The Committee has learnt throughout our inquiry and through submissions that a holistic understanding of people who use family violence can be developed through both broadscale quantitative research and more in-depth qualitative research. What is the best way to bring both quantitative and qualitative research together to form a fuller understanding?

Michael FLOOD: Hayley, I am going to flick that to you.

Hayley BOXALL: How do you do it? I will probably take this one on notice, although my immediate thoughts are I think ANROWS is experimenting with this in the sense that they have just now funded a huge volume of research projects, both qualitative and quantitative, to really answer that question: what do we know about perpetrators? With all the money in the world you would have something like Michael's study expanded to a national context, supplemented with interviews and focus groups with men who use violence and men who are at risk of perpetrating these types of abuse. I use both qualitative and quantitative, and quantitative can be

really, really helpful for addressing a lot of the questions that we have, but sometimes you do just need to talk to people to really understand what is going on for them and their pathways in and pathways out. In terms of making it a nice discrete research project, I do not know what that looks like. It sounds really, really expensive, but it is certainly possible. Something that does both is certainly possible within the Australian context. That is not very articulate, but I have not really thought about it.

Chris CREWTHER: Thank you.

Michael FLOOD: Just on that, in our initial write-ups of the perpetration project, which in fact began I think four or five years ago, with Lula Dembele spearheading it, we crafted some proposed qualitative projects to complement the quantitative data we have now been funded to collect. One was a methodological project about how people understand the kind of questions they are asked in quantitative surveys about perpetration, because obviously we want to ensure that that data is rigorous, but the other thing we thought was 'Let's focus on the populations who are most at risk of using violence'. For example, for sexual violence we know that it is largely young men rather than older men, and it is much more young men than young women who perpetrate sexual violence, so we crafted a second qualitative project that really would involve face-to-face interviews or focus groups to explore young men's understandings and practices about sexual coercion and sexual consent That is an example, I suppose, of the kind of targeted qualitative research you could do to complement quantitative research and to address particular areas of urgent research need.

Chris CREWTHER: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Michael and Hayley, thank you so much for appearing before the Committee today and for your contribution to this important inquiry. We are greatly appreciative of the time that you have taken to provide evidence to us today. It has certainly been a very fascinating conversation.

We will take a short break before our next witness.

Witnesses withdrew.