

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

Cafs Ballarat

Annabelle CLEELAND: I am not sure if you are able to answer this question, and I respect that, but of the situations—the tragedies—that we have seen in Ballarat, have the perpetrators touched services throughout their lives? What I am trying to ask, really poorly, is: this is the tip of the iceberg we are dealing with, and of those most extreme cases, have we seen them at some stage touch a service provider in their lives, or is this an example of those that have been invisible?

Ella MacKAY: With privacy legislation, I am not sure where I sit in terms of answering that question. Is it all right if I take that on notice? It is highly likely that many perpetrators of violence, particularly those involved in extreme cases, have interacted with various services throughout their lives. While these touchpoints may have provided opportunities for intervention, it's important to recognise the complexities involved. Several factors can hinder effective prevention:

- Underreporting: Victims of abuse often don't report their experiences due to fear, shame, or lack of trust in authorities.
- Limited resources: Service providers may be overwhelmed and unable to address all cases adequately.
- Lack of awareness: Professionals may not be trained to recognise signs of abuse or violence, or they may not have the necessary tools to intervene effectively.
- Stigma: The stigma associated with abuse can prevent individuals from seeking help or disclosing their experiences.

Increased information sharing and collaboration between victim survivor supports, and service providers can play a crucial role in prevention.

Chris CREWOTHER: Sorry. I might not have written that down correctly. What opportunities are there to better link data on people who use family violence with information from gambling and financial programs to help understand how perpetration intersects with other behaviours?

Ella MacKAY: What opportunities? So from gambling and financial counselling?

Chris CREWOTHER: Yes.

Ella MacKAY: Yes. And how it links to family violence?

Chris CREWOTHER: Yes.

Ella MacKAY: I might have to take that on notice.

Chris CREWOTHER: And you can take it on notice if that is all right.

Ella MacKAY: I might take that question on notice. I am not aware of data that we can link between different programs other than collaboration and this is an area where having a centralised data collection point and a standardised data collection form that we use across the sector would be helpful.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Just one more question from me. Can you tell us more about Cafs' Strengthening Connections program for young people who use family violence and the data that you collect through this program?

Ella MacKAY: Yes. We have been working with young people who use violence since 2014, I think. I might have to actually take that on notice because I have not been overseeing that program for about eight months and I actually cannot remember which data they are collecting at the moment. Is that okay? It is just about to come back under my management. We're gathering information about various aspects of family dynamics, such as living situations, cultural backgrounds, and disabilities. Our platform is currently under development to enable seamless data extraction and analysis. By collecting this comprehensive data, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the unique needs and experiences of each individual and family. This information informs our efforts to develop targeted interventions and supports that promote safety, stronger connections, resilience, and overall well-being.

The CHAIR: We have heard throughout the inquiry that data around young people who are using violence is a bit of a gap. So if there is anything else that you would like to add as part of your response, whether it is around the data that Cafs is collecting on young people using violence or some recommendations for improvement and some practical steps that the Victorian Government can take, we would really like to hear that from you.

Ella MacKAY: Okay. I might take that on notice and think about it. Invest in research by funding agencies to collect data and report quarterly on the data captured by standardised forms across the sector. Create a centralised data collection point for agencies to report to.

Annabelle CLEELAND: I have got a couple of questions on notice, if possible, but I am just trying to understand—year-on-year maybe is the best comparison on your workload changes while there is such attention on this space—just the number of referrals that you are managing, say, the last financial year to the year prior. And you mention the workload—calls—since the rally. I know you said that that could be confidential; the Secretariat will let you know, anyway. It would be good to know if it does not breach any confidentiality, just in understanding your workload and your funding requirements. And also, if there is a possibility of having that unidentified information on perpetrators recently, whether they have been visible in services prior to the offence being committed—but that is probably one that I have more questions about whether you are able to provide that or not. But it would just be good to understand the touchpoints of where we are collecting data on individuals. Where we need that intervention and to be sharing that information would be excellent to understand. But otherwise, thank you so much for your contribution and everything you are doing in the community.

Ella MacKAY: Thank you very much. Thank you very much. Our funding agreements are based on data from 2019 not current data. I think it is important to note for the 2022 – 2023 Ballarat reported 1892 L17s, Moorabool 1380, Ararat, 2461, Hepburn 1032, and Pyrenees 1277, that is a total of 8042 L17s that went through our Orange Door service (Family Violence Dashboard). Cafs are funded to provide 6 specific Men's practitioners and a Team Leader at The Orange Door. Which means the expectation is 111 per month per staff member. When we consider these figures and the complexity of cases it is obvious our service system is stretched. Then if we are to look at the service sector as a broader system, these cases that have been assessed at The Orange Door also then need a service in the system for support. Cafs is funded to deliver services to 204 men's behaviour change places and 93 men's case management services which is a drop in the ocean compared to the figures published on the family violence dashboard. These figures do not take into consideration, walk in's, phone calls,

professional referrals nor children involved in these referrals, which almost doubles the figures. I am purely reporting on L17 data. We are experiencing long wait times for families we desperately need more staff to respond now. We need to be focussing on the frontline and supporting agencies to deliver services to men and families desperately seeking support. Then when we have events such as the rally which raise awareness and fear we see an increase in self-referrals, walk in's, and professional referrals on an already stretched system. In amongst this stress, we are then grappling with the "competitive market" tenders, and staff retention with fixed term funding. This is an epidemic, that requires years of healing services desperately need some stability and commitment to enable us to do our part in prevention and healing for a safer and healthier community. To reduce family violence, we need to put more funding into the cause of the family violence which is predominantly men, we need more men's services.