

Responses to Questions on Notice, ANROWS

9th October 2024

1. How can the Victorian Government support opportunities to make better use of existing administrative data, through 'data development, data linkage and enhanced data analysis'?

There are barriers to accessing data reported to- and kept by- Victorian departments. Processes for approvals to access data are long and some departments have limited capacity to pull data easily, especially in disaggregated form. Further, internal data systems in departments are often not talking to each other, and externally services on the ground may be using different systems for their organisational purposes to what they use for reporting purposes. As a result, there is a lot of data collected that cannot be pulled out of the different data management systems and cannot be linked to data about the same cases in other data systems. For example, risk assessment data may not be linked to the case management data system from work with people using violence or the case management data system for data from work with women and children. There are also barriers to information and data sharing between sectors and services and across systems. A person using violence could have a case file in housing, a case file in child protection, but these may not be connected in a way that helps build a meaningful picture. In some cases, disparate data sources may be brought together, through for example the coordinated case management work of [Risk Assessment and Management Panels](#) in Victoria, in order to manage individual risk, but the collation of data more broadly is not common practice.

There are opportunities to establish purpose-built algorithms for departments that are the stewards/keepers of a lot of data coming from activity reports and ensure they have in built capacity to use this data for research and evaluations meaningfully. There are also opportunities to increase the capacity of data management systems as there is lots of data collected but not used.

The Victorian Government could support opportunities to make better use of existing administrative data by setting up systems that enable services and researchers to access deidentified data. This could include changes made to funding agreements that consider the data being collected in a method and format that can then be accessed and utilised for research. There is also value in improving data collection practices/capacity amongst government staff. The Victorian Government could consider evaluating government agencies' current data collection practices, data quality and utility for meaningfully understanding, and improving prevention and response to use of violence.

While justice related data can be more easily accessed by government (given the link between government and police and corrections), ANROWS encourages partnerships between researchers and service providers outside of the government agencies and systems. The Government could support researchers that want to undertake research with data from these agencies by providing examples of how government service data has been previously accessed and analysed and led to new insights and system improvements.

At all times privacy laws and ethical codes of research should be considered and followed when collecting and using people's data. Interpretation of data should also carefully consider the context in which the data was collected or recorded and how this could have influenced the data. Administrative data has often not been collected with the intention of it being used for research purposes. This can result in ethical issues which data custodians and data analysts must navigate. There will be limitations within the data that has been collected and the specific variables that were collected/ not collected and their utility to answer research questions for which they were not intended. This could result in an incomplete picture that might be missing nuance and context if it is being sought for a specific purpose. As Dr Rebecca Buys from No to Violence cautioned in the ANROWS webinar [Making better use of existing administrative data](#), "there is a danger that externally driven research questions will impose particular findings on data or particular analytical frameworks that can manipulate it beyond the limits of its collection."

a. What are the limitations of using administrative data about people who use family violence?

Administrative data has an important role to play in building the evidence base. By accessing and analysing this data we can identify improvements to data collection that will enable better analysis at a future point in time. However, there are also limitations when using administrative data as we need to consider who collected this data and for what purpose.

By its nature, administrative data captures people who use domestic, family and sexual violence (DFSV) who have had interactions with the service-system. We know that people from certain marginalised communities such as Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander people have greater and disproportionate rates of contact with criminal-legal systems for example which can render perpetrators of DFSV who are 'white/Caucasian' invisible in these administrative datasets. If we rely on administrative datasets alone to paint a picture of users of DFSV, our understanding is skewed towards those who have system-contact. Relying on administrative data can also skew our understanding of the nature of DFSV perpetrated, for example with regards to criminal justice system and hospital data, physical forms of violence are more likely to be captured in these data sets than for example, coercive control, emotional abuse and financial abuse.

When considering the potential of administrative datasets, it is important to question whose violence is visible and critically whose violence is not visible. When we think about the kinds of services that hold administrative data, it is the most disadvantaged, marginalised and stigmatised people in our community who are forced to engage with services and forced to have their data collected by those services in order to survive. By the same token, it is the most privileged people in society who are not engaging with services, and not having their data collected by virtue of their privilege. When we focus on data held by systems, use of violence by disadvantaged, marginalised and stigmatised people become hyper visible, and use of violence by the most privileged in society is enabled.¹

Another important consideration when considering whose use of violence is invisible, is police-perpetrated DFSV.² This area is under-researched, but has significant implications for state responses to DFSV perpetration, of which police are a core component. While under-studied, international evidence also suggests that police-perpetrated DFSV may be higher than rates for the general population.³ Efforts to advance understandings of DFSV, including the committees

¹For a discussion of this, see ANROWS Webinar, [Making better use of existing administrative data](#), August 27, 2024.

² For more on police-perpetrated DFSV see the [submission to this Inquiry from Flat Out and the Police Accountability Project](#).

³ See the [submission to this Inquiry from Flat Out and the Police Accountability Project](#).

current focus on capturing data related to DFSV perpetration, should consider police-perpetrated DFSV.

- b. What access do the Victorian Government and community service providers have to federal data about people using family violence, and what are the opportunities to improve access?

As part of an environmental scan into the research, practice and data on the perpetration of DFSV undertaken by ANROWS, AIHW and AIFS,⁴ AIHW led an environmental scan of data on DFSV perpetration. The scan identified key national data sources about people using DFSV.

Key data sources identified include:

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) holds several datasets which contain information about people using family violence. This includes:

- Data about defendants for relevant crimes prosecuted in state and territory criminal courts under the ABS Criminal Courts administrative dataset
- Data on characteristics of alleged offenders of relevant crimes who were proceeded against by police. This is held under the ABS Recorded Crime – Offenders administrative dataset

The Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) holds:

- Data about men detained by police for sexual assault in select locations under its AIC Drug Use Among Policy Detainees (DUMA) survey.
- Data about homicides classified as domestic homicide under the AIC National Homicide Monitoring Program
- Data about sexual offences proceeded against by police, under the AIC Sexual Offence Statistical Collection

Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) holds:

- Longitudinal survey data about children and their parents through the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children
- Longitudinal survey data under its project entitled Ten to Men: The Australian Longitudinal Study on Male Health.

The Australian Government Department of Social Services (DSS) holds

- 1800RESPECT data including number of contacts, type of contact (telephone and web chats) and user demographic information.
- Some data to identify perpetrators directly through the DSS Data Exchange (DEX) about the National Perpetrator Intervention and Referral Service.

ANROWS has conducted several national studies which provide data on people who use violence. These include:

- The ANROWS Adolescent family violence in Australia study
- The ANROWS Technology-Facilitated Abuse Survey
- The Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network National Minimum Data Set

⁴ This work fed into the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet's [Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches](#).

Several non-government organisations hold national data sets related to people who use violence:

- No to Violence holds administrative data about its Men's Referral Service for men who use violence.
- Jesuit Social Services conducts The Man Box national survey on attitudes to manhood and behaviours of Australian men ages 18 to 45.
- The University of New South Wales holds survey data through a project aimed at identifying and understanding child sexual offending behaviours and attitudes among Australian men

Accessing federal data

Accessing federal data held by different jurisdictions would need to be negotiated with the relevant federal agency and/or data custodians. Access to this data can be improved by clear Memorandums of Understanding between Victorian Government and the data custodians. Service providers and researchers could be supported to access this data if the request can be endorsed or facilitated by the Victorian Government.

ANROWS recommends that any efforts to improve how data is collected be in accordance with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women & World Health Organization report [Improving the Collection and Use of Administrative Data on Violence against Women Global Technical Guidance](#) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics [Data Collection and Reporting Framework](#).

- c. **How can data capture mechanisms and better data linkage help to build an understanding of patterns of violence and dynamic risk (rather than violence as a single incident)?**

One of the benefits of using linking data is that it can allow information to be captured across time. This may help to build a clearer picture of changing frequency or severity of violence. However, the capacity to collect information about patterns and risks of violence relies on clear and consistent data collection processes across agencies.

Accessing and analysing administrative data can help us understand how victim-survivors and people who use DFSV engage with the broad range of systems and services in society. This data can help shape the discussion points for qualitative data collection that can provide the nuance to the administrative data that it is often missing. It can serve as a starting point for evaluation and system and policy improvements.

Data linkage can enable us to understand how systems intersect with a victim-survivor, a person who uses DFSV or potentially whole-of-families. For example, in the ANROWS funded data linkage project looking at administrative data across 11 NSW Human Services datasets provided new evidence about the prevalence of co-occurring issues and the interlinking nature of these issues for families with child protection involvement. This project also produced prevalence rates of multiple risk factors.⁵

⁵ See Luu et al., (2024). [Analysis of linked longitudinal administrative data on child protection involvement for NSW families with domestic and family violence, alcohol and other drug issues and mental health issues](#) (Research report, 01/2024). ANROWS.

Another ANROWS funded study used data linkage to explore the mental health service use of, and mental health diagnosis associated with, children exposed to DFV. This was achieved through a population-based cohort study using de-identified linked administrative data (police and health records) of children born in Western Australia between 1987 and 2010. This project generated new insights into the effect of DFV on children's mental health.⁶ Projects such as these are only possible with government support, information sharing and consistent data collection.

More broadly there is limited understanding of, and data collected relating to the experiences of children and young people, connected to people using DFSV. Barriers to collecting *any* information about children and young people, include that children and young people are usually connected to women (primarily as victims and survivors) through data collection processes and data systems - not to people who use DFSV (primarily men). Generally, there are such variable levels of information sharing happening between services and across systems where children and young people are involved. Many do not see children and young people as their responsibility or focus and departments often regard children and young people data as in the too hard basket, due to ethics and other challenges as well.

The committee could consider the potential for data custodians relating to children and young people in contact with service systems, that feeds information across system and services, especially relating to risk. At the very least, collecting, understanding and sharing data regarding children and young people in DFSV needs to be recognised as critical to improving safety and preventing DFSV and *all* services/parts of system involved with children and young people need to be clear as to their responsibility for information and data sharing and making appropriate connections through information sharing. Ultimately, better data collection, coordination and sharing relating to children and young people involved with/affected by people who use violence is critical and needs to be properly resourced and alongside building workforce capability for managing data regarding children and young people.

d. What are the challenges and opportunities associated with linking non-justice data, for example from 'banks, real estate and housing services, social media platforms, employers and others'?

Privacy laws can restrict accessing data from systems and services. If people who use DFSV have been identified through workplaces, or banks this can be difficult to share due to breaching privacy.

Setting up agreements or codes of practice with private services⁷ can lead to improved data collection which could inform changes to reporting requirements. This could also identify people who use DFSV in the community that have previously been hidden from systems. The Commonwealth Bank's initiative that improves their ability to identify financial and tech-facilitated abuse is another example of a private sector improving their data collection practices to shed light on the level of preparation of a type of violence that has largely been hidden.

There are however harms inherent in current data collection practices that could be exacerbated through greater data linkage. As one example, there are further challenges and risks when using administrative data collected on Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander peoples. Data

⁶ See Orr et al., (2022). *Investigating the mental health of children exposed to domestic and family violence through the use of linked police and health records* (Research report, 10/2022). ANROWS.

⁷ For example, the new [Online Safety Code for dating services](#).

collection on indigeneity is inconsistent and may not always be safe for someone to disclose. There are also considerations related to *collective privacy*, as Professor Maggie Walter spoke about in the ANROWS webinar [Making better use of existing data](#), while data may be de-identified on a personal level, there is often use of an Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander variable. As Professor Walter explained:

the big thing here for me is the problem with the data is, what is not there? If you are going to examine, as many lazy researchers will Indigenous versus non-Indigenous, in a very simplistic sort of way, then what they will find is, surprise surprise, that Aboriginal people will come out as more likely across all those things.

But ... there is nothing in there that actually contextualises those things. So there is nothing in there that tells us about the intergenerational trauma that these families have been facing since colonisation. There is nothing that tells us about the racism about when people are charged or not charged.

We know that Aboriginal women are much more likely to be charged as the perpetrator of violence when police attend, they non-Aboriginal women. We know all these things but this data is not going to explain these nuances. The risk for me is that the analysis of these data, the collection and linking of these data, will only serve to further stigmatise First Peoples.

I know that big data, linked datasets can provide us with more information, but we have to be really clear about what data are there, and as importantly, what data are not there. It is the 'not there' that are the big ones. Most of these data will end up blaming First Peoples more. And they will be reductive. The Indigenous indicator will be used as if the difference between First Nations and other people is somehow a trait of Indigenous people - somehow who we are will come up in these negative stats.

Contextualisation matters, superficial interpretation of data without contextualisation not only fails to progress efforts to end DFSV but causes harm. As one step in responding to these concerns data sovereignty rights need to be considered as Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia often have no control over how their data is collected and used.⁸

We disproportionately collect data on people facing structural inequities. Broadening data collection to beyond service settings, to banks, real estate and others could help broaden the data landscape to some of the more privileged people who use violence. Keeping in mind the risks of harm, that are potentially exacerbated by data linkage, it is critical that the case for data linkage is made. That is, that we are not linking data for data linkage sake, but that we are meaningfully and intentionally using this to answer the most pressing questions being asked across the service system.

3. How can the Victorian Government build the capacity of community service providers to meaningfully and accurately capture and analyse data about people who use family violence?

The Victorian Government can support community service providers to capture and analyse data by:

- Providing adequate funding to do this work alongside providing critical services to the community. These services are oftentimes stretched for resources and therefore need dedicated resourcing to collect and analyse data.

⁸ See for example, the [Kowa Collaboration resources](#) for appropriate and collaborative ways of collecting Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander data.

- Enhancing IT capacity and usability of data management systems, including in-house data systems available to service providers.
- Ensuring Government data management systems are fit-for-purpose and streamlined to enable community service providers to engage in reporting more effectively.
- Ensuring there is clarity around the usefulness of capturing data to frontline services. It is essential to communicate how the Government will use this data, and why it is important. Noting that often what is most useful to service providers can be data at a more granular level rather than big data. There needs to be greater accountability for the data requested, flexibility in reporting requirements, and greater clarity of intention and utility of the data to offer meaningful insights.
- Work with Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) in the development of internal department data systems to ensure those systems can adapt to ACCOs data systems, where they are different.
- Supporting services to utilise their data for their own improvements: to better understand their service environment, identify areas for improvement or where additional funding is required.
- Place minimum standards on government for no service providers to have to submit information twice, avoiding double entry across platforms.
- Ensure accountability for people who use violence and related data does not purely rest with one service that is currently engaging with them. Currently, services working with people who use DFSV are often having to chase information about clients and related risk.

- a. Does the Victorian Government employ specialist data advisors, working across sectors and services, to provide education, training and best practice guidance on data collection and analysis? If not, what opportunities are there for the Victorian Government to do so?

If they don't this is an opportunity. Other governments have funded providers to support front-line services to improve their collection of data. For example, the AIFS / DSS-funded [Evidence and Evaluation Support team](#) and the QCOSS/ Queensland government funded [DFSV data insights initiative](#).

When considering best practice guidance on data collection and analysis, it is also critical to look at the tools being used and whether they are appropriate and fit-for-purpose.⁹ Establishing specialist data advisors will be limited if the tools that services are using have limited utility.

4. How can the Victorian Government support the capture and analysis of qualitative data that leads to a more nuanced understanding of people who use family violence?

Context matters. Qualitative data is necessary for making sense of data and drawing meaningful and accurate insights. We need to be clear about intention, not collecting data for data sake, and to recognise that qualitative data is not supplementary, it is not an add on but is central in and of itself to accurately understanding DFSV perpetration.

⁹ Others have spoken to the variation in data management tools and their utility across the DFSV sector. See for example the [submission from Safe and Equal](#) to this Inquiry.

Learning from the [partnership between ANROWS and the Australian Domestic and Family Violence Death Review Network](#), we know that in order to conduct in-depth qualitative case reviews, teams need to be sufficiently resourced. The work takes time and expertise. There is a need for sustainable and further resourcing of various bodies that hold data related to use of violence to allow them to conduct in-depth case reviews and maintain/update their data systems. This should include for example, services providing behaviour change programs, as well as jurisdictional Death Review mechanisms among others.

Critically, some qualitative data is already being captured, albeit not consistently, through for example case notes held by individual services and where it is captured, there is typically insufficient resources to make best use of this data through rigorous analysis. One example of the value of qualitative data can be seen for example, in the NSW Death Review work which involved in-depth case review analysis.¹⁰ The analysis of qualitative data showed for example, “the ways abusers can weaponise the victim’s mental health and AOD use, exploiting the systemic discrimination and stigma associated with these issues to undermine or manipulate a victim’s access to supports and services.”¹¹ Such patterns and nuances of perpetration would not be identified without examination of qualitative data.

5. What are ANROWS current funded research projects relevant this Inquiry and the expected publication dates?

In June 2024, [ANROWS announced funding of eight projects](#) aimed at understanding domestic, family and sexual violence perpetration. This was followed by an additional [six projects announced in July 2024](#). Anticipated publication dates span December 2025-June 2027, noting that publication dates may be subject to change. Key projects of relevance to the Inquiry include:

- [Measuring domestic, family and sexual violence perpetration in Australia](#). This project, led by Professor Michael Flood, intended to map existing data on DFSV perpetration in Australia to understand what is already being collected. However, in the time since the project was commissioned, the AIHW has, in partnership with ANROWS, undertaken an environmental scan of data on perpetration to help inform the Rapid Review of Prevention Approaches.¹² The project team are therefore currently planning to amend this component of the project to focus on data about perpetration that is being collected by Good Shepherd. Anticipated publication October 2026.
- [Using data to respond to domestic and family violence perpetration within military and veteran families](#). This project, led by Associate Professor Sean Cowlshaw and jointly commissioned by ANROWS and the Department of Veterans Affairs (Cth). The project aims to develop foundations for monitoring trends in DFV use among Australian Defence Force personnel and veterans through mapping and analyses of data systems. It is intended that findings are beneficial across multiple sectors and relevant service systems, including military and veteran-centric services as well as mainstream DFV services. Anticipated publication June 2026.
- [Trauma-related pathways into adolescent family violence use](#). Led by Dr Nina Papalia, this project uses linked administrative data to undertake the first population-based prospective longitudinal analysis of the pathways from childhood maltreatment to adolescent family violence. The project also involves a qualitative co-creation

¹⁰ See the [Domestic Violence Death Review Team Report 2021-2023](#).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, XXVII

¹² The environmental scan of data on perpetration is discussed above in response to question 1b.

component to develop an integrated and trauma-informed explanatory framework of adolescent family violence. Anticipated publication June 2027.

- [*The role and impact of Men's Behaviour Change Programs in IPV desistance pathways.*](#) This project, led by Dr Hayley Boxall, investigates the role of MBCPs in facilitating pathways out of perpetration, identifies factors that support or hinder these pathways, and explores how these dynamics vary across a diversity of backgrounds and over time. Anticipated publication date May 2027.
- [*Building an evidence-based response to sexual violence perpetration against LGBTQ+ people in Australia.*](#) Led by Professor Adam Bourne, this project aims to generate actionable knowledge to respond to sexual violence against LGBTQ+ individuals, focusing on social forces, risk factors and characteristics of people who use DFSV. Anticipated publication date February 2026.
- [*We Keep Us Safe: Codesigning community-led responses to DFSV among people with a history of criminalisation and drug use.*](#) Led by Jade Lane, this project will generate new evidence on community-led, non-carceral responses to DFSV. Anticipated publication date June 2026.

Additionally, ANROWS was commissioned by the Northern Territory Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities to undertake two process evaluations of the government-funded Men's Behaviour Change Programs (MBCPs) in the Northern Territory. In late 2024, ANROWS will publish a paper summarising the key findings of the evaluations alongside the Quality practice elements for men's behaviour change programs (MBCPs) in the Northern Territory practice guidance resource. Although contextualised to the Northern Territory, the summary paper and Quality Practice Elements will be relevant to jurisdictions across Australia and may be of value to the current Inquiry.

a. **What work has ANROWS undertaken to understand how data systems capture data on family violence and people who use family violence¹³ and what are the key findings relevant to Victoria?**

Many organisations are involved in collecting and establishing their own data systems to inform organisational practice - some of the data collected is standardised and feeds into broader data at state, territory and national levels through for example reporting requirements, much of it does not. When talking about what we know about capturing data on domestic, family and sexual violence and ANROWS work related to data capture - we take an expansive view of data systems and speak broadly to data captured at various levels.

ANROWS funded [12 projects under the ANROWS Perpetrator Interventions Research Priorities in 2017-2019](#), as well as other past projects in our [perpetrator intervention stream](#). This body of work was primarily focused on people who use family violence, in the men's behaviour change program (MBCP) context, and therefore focused on data captured in relation to people who use violence and come into contact with MBCPs. Findings and recommendations from these projects of particular relevance to this Inquiry include:

- The recommendation to trial a national minimum data set (MDS) for MBCPs.¹⁴ This is a recommendation made in the project [Improved accountability: The role of perpetrator](#)

¹³ At a public hearing, Good Shepherd ANZ stated 'ANROWS is doing a review of data systems and how they are capturing family violence and family violence perpetration data', see Good Shepherd [public hearing transcript](#), Monday 5 August, p. 66

¹⁴ See Chapter 8: Developing a minimum data set for domestic and family violence perpetrator interventions.

[intervention systems](#), which sought to develop a national minimum data set (MDS) for MBCPs in Australia. While this study focused on MBCPs, the development of a Victorian and/ or National MDS should look beyond this context. As part of the MDS for MBCPs project, MDS data collection instruments for both participant-level and service-level data collection, were developed, trialled and evaluated with 15 MBCPs across Australia.¹⁵ There are however notable limitations of the variables collected and the capacity to infer meaningful insights. For example, if we consider as one example the variable completion, we know program completion does not necessarily reflect meaningful engagement in behaviour change work, and could reflect compliance with formal pressures (connected for example to intervention orders, child protection involvement, etc.), we also know that factors such as housing insecurity are connected to non-completion¹⁶ and therefore completion may reflect structural inequities rather than provide meaningful insight into motivation or potential for behaviour change. While some information on reasons for non-completion are collected, caution in the interpretation of what this actually tells us about use of and users of DFSV, and what insights we draw to inform prevention and response is required. There are also risks in the collection of and use of variables such as Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander status and potential for harm when inferring differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples from such variables.¹⁷ We would caution the focus on measures that are compliance and deficit focused. As we noted in our submission, it is imperative to consider the need for meaningful qualitative measurement that allows more accurate understanding of perpetration – exploring how to do this well, and improving the data that is collected, should be a priority.

- The finding that data capture on perpetration is not always accurate and where patterns of coercive control and social entrapment are poorly understood interventions can increase risk to victims and survivors rather than increasing safety. This is a key finding of the project [Kungas' trauma experiences and effects on behaviour in Central Australia](#). Issues of data accuracy, including misidentification will undermine any attempts to capture accurate data on people who use DFSV and disproportionately harms Aboriginal and/ or Torres Strait Islander women.¹⁸
- The recommendation for collaborative practices between human services agencies, legal systems, and men's family violence interventions (including MBCPs).¹⁹ This finding was borne from across many reports funded under this round. As part of this work, ANROWS developed a [synthesis](#) of the findings from these reports which speaks for the need for greater collaborative practice.
- The finding that program evaluation presents a valuable data collection opportunity, while noting that one of the factors that influences evaluation methods is data availability.²⁰ Evaluations impact policy and practice but are stymied by limited rigorous

¹⁵ See Appendix J (participant-level MDS data collection instrument) and Appendix K (service-level MDS data collection instrument) of Chung, D., Upton-Davis, K., Cordier, R., Campbell, E., Wong, T., Salter, M. ... Bissett, T. (2020). [Improved accountability: The role of perpetrator intervention systems](#) (Research report, 20/2020). Sydney: ANROWS

¹⁶ See, [Engaging in Change: A Victorian study of perpetrator program attrition and participant engagement in men's behaviour change programs](#).

¹⁷ As discussed in responses to question 1d.

¹⁸ Misidentification is a significant issue, as discussed in a number of submissions made to the Inquiry. See for example, the [submission by Djirra](#) to the Inquiry.

¹⁹ Australia's National Research Organisation for Women's Safety. (2021). [Interventions for perpetrators of domestic, family and sexual violence in Australia](#) (ANROWS Insights, 02/2021). ANROWS.

²⁰ [AES state of evaluation report 14_03_23 final.pdf](#)

and meaningful data. The potential flow on effects of improving the rigour and meaningfulness of data collected for moving away from superficial measures has exciting potential. While there may not be a clear example of how we should be collecting data, there are opportunities to trial and test new approaches and to grapple with the question of how to capture meaningful qualitative measures.

- b. **What challenges are faced by researchers because of Victoria's use of multiple databases to collect information on people using family violence (for example, Integrated Reports and Information System (IRIS) and Tools for Risk Assessment and Management (TRAM))?**

ANROWS is not aware of any research projects that have accessed data from the specific databases referenced in the question.

Whilst we cannot comment specifically on any challenges, it is likely that researchers would work directly with service providers for research and evaluation, accessing their data outside of these databases.

6. **What are the impacts of the current 'reliance on individualised, deficit-orientated and reductionist model of risk assessment'²¹ on data collection and analysis?**

Deficit-focused approaches to risk assessment are antithetical to trauma-informed responses. Deficit approaches are harmful because they equate 'markers/ 'risks' (such as AOD use) with outcomes (such as use of violence), often inferring causation, such that individuals or groups (such as those with problematic AOD use) are reduced to these markers and become stigmatised as 'the problem'. This exacerbates the marginalisation and stigmatisation of already marginalised and stigmatised groups.

If we consider the AOD example further. We know that AOD and DFSV are correlated. For example, it is known that DFSV perpetration is often more severe and more likely to result in hospitalisation where problematic AOD use is also a factor. We also know that AOD use is not causal of violence, that addressing problematic AOD use in society would likely see a reduction in the severity of DFSV – and this is a valuable outcome to work towards – but that it would not see an end to DFSV. We should invest in this space, but we must not lose sight of other contexts in which DFSV occurs and we must resist reductionist and deficit approaches that reduce individuals or groups to markers such as their use of AOD, their mental health status, etc.

The impact of such an approach is that it skews our understanding of DFSV perpetration across the population to focus on DFSV as perpetrated by the most marginalised and stigmatised communities in society. The other impact of a reductionist and deficit focused approach is that it is stigmatising and demoralising, it does not take into account relevant contextualisation, such as childhood trauma that may underpin current problematic AOD use, and it does not motivate people to change their behaviour. This is not to excuse use of violence, but if we want to meaningfully engage with people who use violence to change their behaviour, we do need to consider trauma-informed, strengths-based approaches to this work.

- a. **How can the Victorian Government mitigate these impacts?**

²¹ ANROWS Submission 15, p. 14.

Where efforts are focused on specific service settings such as AOD, MH, it is essential that this work is done collaboratively, with service providers that are skilled in navigating complexities associated with stigmatisation and disadvantage to ensure harms are not reproduced through data collection, data analysis, dissemination or translation into policy and practice.

Alongside this, focused effort must be paid to bringing into view users of violence who are left to be invisible, simply because we do not pay attention to the settings they occupy. This must include police-perpetrated DFSV.

Consider what strengths-based approaches and trauma-informed care can look like when working with people who use violence – recognising that a focus on perpetration does not need to decentre the focus on victim-survivors. There is space for both. Drawing on whole-of-family and whole-of-community thinking about recovery and healing might be a way through the polarising nature of these debates. Recovery and healing for people who use violence could further be re-framed as recovery and healing for victim-survivors - particularly in the context of many victim-survivors saying what they want is for the violence to end. It is necessary to think creatively about what is needed to end gender-based violence, to recognise that deficit-oriented approaches are not effective and to move towards strengths-based approaches to working with people who use violence.

7. How can the Victorian Government support the implementation of national minimum data sets in Victoria?

To support the implementation of an MDS the Victorian Government can:

- Being clear about the purpose of data collection, what measures are being collected/ requested and why, what do they tell us that contributes to the broader goal of ending gender-based violence. If the goal is to better understand use of violence and improve prevention and response efforts, then we know we need to move beyond systems data. The Victorian Government can ensure they justify and are accountable for the meaningfulness of data collected.
- Prioritise meaningful outcomes rather than outputs. There is ‘no silver bullet’²² for meaningful outcomes measures, however we do know some of the patterns and outcomes that are more meaningful for understanding DFSV perpetration. For example, we know the value of victim-survivor accounts for measuring whether violence is ongoing. We also know that police data provides a partial picture of wider DFSV perpetration, and that the accuracy of this data is impacted by misidentification.²³ These are just two examples, but drawing on what we know about the quality, rigour and accuracy of various data measures can help us to determine what data to prioritise.
- Adopt greater flexibility in reporting requirements to minimise the impost on service providers, and to allow greater contribution and collaboration from service providers regarding what meaningful outcomes could or should be measured. While there needs to be some uniformity of measures at the state/ National level, in the first instance exploring what is possible at the local level and prioritising listening and learning about what meaningful outcome measures could be reported. Again, not collecting big data for big

²² Boyd-Caine, T. (2023). [When the problems we’re trying to solve are complex, there is no silver bullet for outcomes measurement](#). *Health justice Australia*.

²³ Nancarrow, H., Thomas, K., Ringland, V. & Modini, T. (2020). [Accurately identifying the “person Most in need of protection” in domestic and family violence law](#) (Research report, 23/2020).

Sydney: ANROWS; Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor. (2021). [Accurate identification of the Predominant aggressor](#). Office of the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor. State of Victoria.

data's sake but being clear about purpose and contribution to the goal of ending gender-based violence.

- Centre practice expertise as informing the way to improve data. The Victorian Government can prioritise listening to and working in partnership with services that have contact with people who use violence, to understand what measures are useful for their own work, what data would be beneficial to them, and to embed flexibility in reporting requirements to support more meaningful data collection and use. The Victorian Government can provide appropriate resourcing so as to not add to the burden of already stretched frontline services when trialling different approaches to data collection and analysis.
- Trial an MDS in Victoria. Drawing on previous attempts to trial minimum datasets, such as the ANROWS project [Improved accountability: The role of perpetrator intervention systems](#) discussed earlier (see response to question 5a), and work by the NSW Department of Justice to develop a minimum data set (MDS) for MBCPs as part of their [practice standards for MBCPs](#) may be a useful starting point. However, the above points need to be considered, and measures need to prioritise meaningful insights over big data. The usefulness of an MDS depends on the utility, accuracy, availability and rigour of relevant data. It would require respect for data sovereignty, privacy, collaborative data governance and collaborative data analysis. As such, there is work to do in establishing 'readiness' to trial a meaningful MDS.
- Support greater transparency of data as appropriate. Where measures are reported at a high-level, there are risks of data being used to draw inaccurate findings and implications. There may also be limited capacity to interrogate the accuracy of findings reported without adequate information to do so. Data transparency is essential for facilitating interrogation of findings and ensuring accountability for any conclusions drawn. Data transparency is also important for ensuring data is available to contribute to an MDS. There is currently a reliance on criminal justice system, and in particular police data to understand DFSV perpetration, as such greater transparency of police data is particularly important.

8. How can the Victorian Government capture 'population-wide data focused on prevalence ... beyond systems'?

There is no dataset that will provide a perfect picture of DFSV perpetration, however representative, repeated, population-based surveys and birth cohort studies can offer value here. As discussed above, not everyone who uses violence will have service contact, and further where there is service contact the nature and quality of service engagement will vary. As a result, relying on service system data provides a limited view of DFSV perpetration, and inevitably skews towards marginalised, disadvantaged and/ or stigmatised communities who have disproportionate contact with systems. Other datasets, while imperfect, are important for building a more accurate picture of DFSV perpetration across the population.

Notably, it is increasingly difficult to achieve representative samples in population-based surveys and a huge amount of data is required if you want to be able to look at subgroups within a population. Issues of collective privacy (discussed in response to question 1d) also need to be considered as there are dangers of further stigmatising groups within society. The value of a population-based survey needs to be understood alongside the need for contextualisation, through qualitative data. While ANROWS supports the use of a population-based survey as way to advance our understanding of DFSV across the population, it is important to caution that a population-based survey is not a solution to the data challenges we face. Quantitative data is

going to be constrained, in the same ways other forms of data are. In the context of a population-wide survey it will be constrained by who puts it together, the biases they hold, what is prioritised, what is captured and critically what is not captured.

Population-wide data focused on prevalence beyond systems is valuable for several reasons:

1. Research beyond systems has the potential to capture the forms of violence against women and children that most frequently go unrecorded by systems and that are normalised by society to the extent that they are not recognised or disclosed.
2. Currently, the Personal Safety Survey provides valuable prevalence estimates from victim and survivor perspectives. However, these provide very limited details about the perpetrators.
3. Population-wide prevalence data has the potential to provide insight into who is perpetrating violence, how often, where, and against how many people.
4. To be able to confidently make conclusions on whether there have been true changes over time, the data needs to be measured the same way and collected from the same individuals multiple times (longitudinal) or representative of the population it is collected from each time it is measured (cross sectional).

However, there are also limitations to population-wide data collection:

1. It is expensive to get and analyse the quantity of data required to be representative of the population.
2. A purely representative sample can come at the expense of detail on population subgroups. By definition a sample that is representative of the Australian population, should represent all of the diversity present in the population, in roughly similar proportions to the population. Therefore, to answer research questions with a national dataset about each jurisdiction, about a subgroup who make up a small proportion of the population, or both, requires an extremely large representative national data collection.

Sufficient time, funding, and expertise needs to be provided not just to split and report on data, but to understand, analyse and interpret data, otherwise we risk harmful and misleading interpretations. An example from the NCAS is that we ran a regression analysis to understand what demographic factors had the strongest influence on attitudes. This found that disability and attitudes are not related. However, disability and age are highly related, and age and attitudes are also related. If someone were to provide a split of attitudes by disability, they could promote a harmful and incorrect assertion about the attitudes of people with disabilities.

Birth-cohort studies, like the Australian Institute of Family Studies Australian Longitudinal Study on Male Health *Ten to Men*, would also provide valuable insights into use of violence and should be considered as part of the broader suite of work to advance data on people who use violence across the population.

Capacity and capability building to collect data in a broader range of settings, considering for example the role of workplaces, education settings including early childhood settings, and general health should also be considered as a way to build our understanding of DFSV perpetration.

a. Which other interstate or international jurisdictions have conducted population-wide surveys on prevalence and people who use family violence and what can be learned from these about research methodology?

In Australia and internationally, most population-wide surveys draw on victim-survivor data. For example, the Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey. These provide valuable insights into DFSV prevalence.

Other datasets that are valuable and provide insights but are not necessarily conducted with people who use DFSV, and/ or are not representative, population-wide samples:

- The Australian Institute of Family Studies Australian Longitudinal Study on Male Health [*Ten to Men*](#) mentioned in response to the previous question. The first wave involved collecting health and lifestyle information from almost 16,000 boys and men across Australia. The sample was topped up in 2023-2024 and now has a sample of approximately 24,000 men. The study follows boys and men from 10 years old through to adulthood, collecting health and lifestyle information. The data includes some linked data, and researchers can apply to access and analyse the data. The study is not focused on use of violence specifically.
- The [*United Nations Multi-Country Study on Men and Violence in Asia and the Pacific*](#). The study surveyed more than 10,000 men and 3,000 women in nine sites across six countries. In most cases (except Cambodia) the samples are not nationally representative. The study examines prevalence and patterns of intimate partner violence, non-partner and partner rape, the diversity of men's lives (gender practices, experiences of violence and adversity), and factors associated with violence perpetration.
- Jesuit Social Services conducts [*The Man Box national survey*](#) on attitudes to manhood and behaviours of Australian men ages 18 to 45. The survey uses a representative and random sample of men from across Australia to explore associations between attitudes to masculine stereotypes and behaviours but is not focused on use of DFSV.
- The [*Identifying and understanding child sexual offending behaviours and attitudes among Australian men*](#) project (University of New South Wales) used a cross-sectional representative sample of Australian adult men to explore the prevalence and attitudinal, behavioural and demographic correlates of sexual feelings and/or offending against children amongst Australian men.

The research teams involved in these studies would likely have valuable advice to the Victorian Government should they decide to undertake a DFSV perpetration study with similar methods to any of the above.

b. How could the Victorian Government better support opportunities for the community, victim survivors and people who use/previously used family violence to proactively participate in research?

It is important to ensure research is inclusive. This requires moving beyond participation to ensuring opportunities for co-production in research. There are many strategies that can be employed to advance such opportunities, this includes for example making sure funding agreements for research projects funded by government agencies include budget for community-based staff, victim-survivors and people who use/ have used violence to co-produce the work. It could also include flexibility in funding agreements to allow time to establish meaningful partnerships with communities and genuine co-creation. Resources such as [*An Australian Framework for the ethical co-production of research and evaluation with victim survivors of domestic, family, and sexual violence*](#) provide further guidance.

- c. Are there systems/techniques in place elsewhere that Victoria can learn from or look at to inform their practices?

Victoria can learn from other population-wide surveys, including for example the ANROWS funded NSW pilot study currently underway (discussed in response to question 5) as well as other datasets discussed in response to question 1b.

Critically there is no perfect model, so flexibility, adaptability and a willingness to trial different approaches to learn from them and change is fundamental to building a picture of population-wide perpetration prevalence beyond systems.

9. What are some practical ways the Victorian Government can support and promote Indigenous data sovereignty?

The Victorian Government can engage with First Nations voices on promoting Indigenous Data Sovereignty. Key frameworks, principles and guidelines include for example, the [Maiaam nayri Wingara principles](#), resources that support the operationalisation and implementation of Indigenous data sovereignty principles such as the [OCCAAARS Framework for First Nations Data Sovereignty](#) developed by Kowa, as well as Government frameworks such as the [Framework for Governance of Indigenous Data](#).

The committee should consider as central how to ensure that Indigenous Data sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance are built into any reporting and recommendations from the Inquiry, and how this can be embedded in any operationalisation or implementation of recommendations that might follow.

- a. Does ANROWS support the adoption of the Maiaam Nayri Wingara, the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Data Sovereignty Collective, Indigenous Data Sovereignty techniques and principles?²⁴

It is important that we are listening to and hearing First Nations voices on Indigenous Data Sovereignty. Indigenous Data Sovereignty is about the right of Indigenous peoples to exercise ownership over Indigenous Data and Indigenous Data Governance is about the right of Indigenous peoples to autonomously decide what, how and why Indigenous Data is collected accessed and used.²⁵ The [Maiaam nayri Wingara principles](#) were developed from an Indigenous Data Sovereignty summit and reflect the shared understanding of summit delegates views. Listening to and hearing First Nations voices requires engaging with the Maiaam nayri Wingara principles.

10. What are some practical ways the Victorian Government can strategically bring together research about people who use family violence and consider it collectively to inform policy and practice?

Earlier this year the [Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia hosted an inaugural National Family Violence Symposium](#) that brought together 80 stakeholders from across Australia working in DFSV and related sectors. ANROWS attended the event, and it provided a much-needed forum for bringing together key voices to work together in considering key challenges

²⁴ See VACCHO, Submission 40, p. 7.

²⁵ See [Defining Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Indigenous Data Governance](#).

facing the sector. Too often these discussions are siloed, and bringing everyone together without distraction seemed to be a useful model.

The Victorian Government could consider convening a similar event on an annual basis that brings together relevant stakeholders for a focused problem-solving discussion related to DFSV perpetration. The advantage of such a format is that everyone is genuinely and meaningfully focused on the problem at hand. We would note however, that for this to be a good use of resources there must be government accountability for action following any outcomes of such an event. Noting that conversation for conversations sake is only going to further fatigue the DFSV and related sectors.