

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria

Melbourne—Monday 5 August 2024

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WITNESSES

Amanda Alford, Director of Government Relations, Policy and Evidence, and

Ebony King, Senior Policy Adviser, Our Watch.

The CHAIR: Good morning. My name is Ella George, and I am the Chair of the Legislative Assembly's Legal and Social Issues Committee. We will now resume our public hearings into the Committee's Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria. Our current witnesses that we have with us today are from Our Watch: Ebony King, Senior Policy Adviser, and Amanda Alford, Director. Thank you very much to Ebony and Amanda for appearing before the Committee today and to Our Watch for your preparation of your submission and evidence to this inquiry.

All evidence being 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 of 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 will now invite Our Watch to make a brief statement of around 5 to 10 minutes, and this will be followed by questions from members.

Amanda ALFORD: Thank you so much, Committee Members, for the opportunity to appear this morning. I would like to begin by acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land upon which we meet today and pay my respects to both elders past and present and extend those respects to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as part of the Committee or listening today but also extend those respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations that are appearing both later today and throughout the course of the inquiry. I recognise their ongoing resilience, strength and understanding of what works in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

It is a real pleasure to be here on behalf of Our Watch this morning. As the Chair mentioned, my name is Amanda Alford. I am the national Director of Government Relations, Policy and Evidence at Our Watch, and I am joined by my colleague Ebony King. In my role as Director of Government Relations, Policy and Evidence I work with the Commonwealth Government and state and territory governments across Australia to really embed primary prevention approaches across the social, structural, attitudinal, legislative, policy and regulatory structures in Australia and to embed primary prevention across what we call settings, so essentially the places where we live, learn, work and socialise.

I should acknowledge that the Victorian Government is a member of Our Watch—a valued and founding member of Our Watch—so we work really closely with the Victorian Government and with Victorian- and national-based organisations. I note that we are appearing in our capacity as a national organisation with the Victorian Government as a member and really extend my congratulations to the national and Victorian organisations who provided submissions and have given evidence and acknowledge their particular expertise in the context of the Victorian system, including from my colleagues who appeared earlier.

I also want to acknowledge the importance of this inquiry and the value in having this inquiry. We know that over the course of many years the Victorian Government and the Victorian community have led reform in relation to domestic, family and sexual violence and prevention of that violence, and there is a real opportunity through this inquiry, through development of the next rolling action plan, to consolidate that leadership, to take the opportunity to look at what is working, how we could build and strengthen on those things and think about what the next steps are, what the gaps are, what the opportunities are and what the next pieces of the puzzle are. The work in relation to perpetrators absolutely, in our view, falls into that category.

It is also, really importantly, a bipartisan issue, and Our Watch prides itself on working in a bipartisan way. It is so lovely to be joined today by a range of MPs from across parties, because really if there is any other issue that needs to be above politics, it is this one. So thank you for your bipartisan commitment to this issue. I also want to acknowledge the strength and resilience of victim-survivors. We know for many years data collection, evidence and interventions have had a focus on victimisation, so we absolutely pay tribute to victim-survivors, but we also know that keeping victim-survivors safe requires looking at perpetrators and identifying the threat to those victim-survivors, which is why this inquiry and these discussions are such an important piece of the puzzle.

We know at the moment that there is a range of existing data in relation to perpetration at a Commonwealth, state and territory level but that there are also limitations to that data. So what we have spoken about in our submission and what we would like to explore further today are the opportunities to strengthen existing datasets and the use of that data but also opportunities to collect further data in relation to perpetration, particularly at that national level, because we know that making good decisions and government having the right evidence to inform its decisions requires the full picture. So really understanding the dynamics, the nature, the prevalence of perpetration of violence against women and children in all its forms is an incredibly important part of the puzzle.

We also know that without consistent, comparable data nationally and across jurisdictions as well as within jurisdictions it makes it more difficult to understand the effect and impact of the interventions and the investments that we are making as community and as governments, but also to compare across jurisdictions and really get a good national and whole-of-population view about all parts of the puzzle. In a very specific sense in Victoria, for example, it makes it difficult to report against one of the outcomes under the Victorian outcomes framework in relation to perpetration, under the national plan and at a national level. Essentially the third pillar of understanding the full picture is missing at the moment in terms of perpetration data. That lack of evidence restricts the ability of governments to make evidence-informed decisions, of organisations like Our Watch, but also of organisations across the spectrum. Our Watch primarily focuses on primary prevention, but we know that we need interventions and we need the system to work across primary prevention, early intervention, response and recovery and that we need all parts of the system to work really effectively together and have the best evidence to inform that work.

In our submission, which I have no doubt we will have questions about, we have made a number of key recommendations. One is in relation to a potential national perpetrator strategy and national perpetrator study. There are also some recommendations about ways in which we can build on existing data and some of the considerations that we think it is useful for the Committee to consider in terms of scope, definitions and terminology, in terms of making sure that we take an intersectional approach to the work that we are doing and making sure that we have the right considerations in relation to the experiences of particular population groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in particular but also our refugee and migrant and CALD communities and members of the LGBTIQ+ community.

As I mentioned, one of the recommendations is for a national perpetrator study, and in our view I think there are absolutely opportunities to strengthen the existing data at a state and territory level and at a national level, but really a national perpetrator study is the third pillar missing in the National Plan at the moment. We have the National Community Attitudes Survey and we have the Personal Safety Survey, but there is no national dataset in relation to perpetration. Really that is the gap that we spoke to in our submission. That would give us a really good understanding of perpetration of violence in all its forms as well as the structural drivers of that, so both risk factors and preventative factors in terms of perpetration. We welcome the recent acknowledgement by the National Plan and ANROWS and others of the opportunities to address data gaps—the recent funding, for example, of Professor Michael Flood and Lula Dembele and others by ANROWS of really a leading study in relation to perpetration data, and I understand they are appearing before you in the next couple of weeks, which is really useful.

I think, as I said, there is a real opportunity for the Victorian Government and for Victoria to continue its national leadership role here, to identify opportunities to strengthen existing data, to build new pieces of data, show ongoing leadership, but as part of a national picture. I congratulate the Committee on this important inquiry. I look forward to our questions today, and I will pass to my colleague Ebony to make a short statement as well.

Ebony KING: Thanks, Amanda. Amanda covered many of the key points, so I will just introduce myself. I am a Senior Policy Adviser, and my role focuses on providing support to our government members on the monitoring of outcomes in relation to the prevention of violence against women as well as some not very exciting work around reporting to the Department of Social Services and our pretty significant work there.

My focus has been quite significantly on data gaps, in particular the national data development plan has a big focus on the gaps around perpetration and then the national plan also acknowledges that this is a gap that needs to be addressed. If we actually are going to end violence against women, we need to focus on perpetration. As Amanda mentioned, the *Family Violence Outcomes Framework* has a perpetrator domain, the third domain,

and that includes measures that currently have really limited data. I used to work at Family Safety Victoria and my team wrote the report, their last *Ending Family Violence* report. It was a real challenge writing the perpetrator domain write-up because we just did not have the data that we needed. In particular there is a headline measure around the prevalence of family violence perpetration in Victoria, and you are just not going to be able to measure that progress without having a population-level survey. You can use administrative data, but as we know, 79% of women do not report violence, so the people who come into contact with the service system are a minority. We need to have a population focus in order to really adequately measure perpetration prevalence. I will leave it there.

The CHAIR: Great.

Amanda ALFORD: We welcome any questions from the Committee.

The CHAIR: Thank you, Amanda and Ebony, for an excellent introduction. Amanda, you spoke about the need for further collection of data at a national level and in particular family violence that is unreported. That is certainly a theme that we have seen through other submissions as well, so I would like to touch on that. My first question is: to your knowledge, is a national perpetrator strategy currently being considered at a federal level?

Amanda ALFORD: Look, it is an excellent question. I think the National Plan really clearly identifies the gaps and opportunities with respect to perpetration. We work very closely with the Commonwealth Government, with DSS, Office for Women and others, in relation to the National Plan, the National Outcomes Framework, the Performance Measurement Plan and the Data Improvement Plan, so there are kind of a range of planks to the national strategy. I am not aware of any specific consideration of a perpetrator strategy as such at a national level, but absolutely the Minister and the Commonwealth Government have recognised the further need and opportunities in that space, complemented of course by our colleagues at ANROWS, who are another part of the national plan architecture alongside Our Watch, who have through the national research agenda, for example, recognised the opportunities there and through their recent funding of the Flood and Dembele research, for example, recognised that. So there is absolutely awareness and consideration of that. I am not aware of any specific consideration of a national perpetrator strategy as such, but I do think there is a meeting of the minds on the importance of this and certainly across states and territories either initial consideration or more active consultation and development of perpetrator studies across jurisdictions as well.

The CHAIR: And a national perpetrator strategy with a national study on perpetration—is that something that Our Watch would recommend pursuing?

Amanda ALFORD: It is. Look, we think there is excellent work happening across states and territories, and there is a really important role for the Victorian Government and Victoria to build on the reforms here, to build on the really strong prevention infrastructure and to build on the data that is being collected. Similarly, other jurisdictions are in different places along their prevention journey with increasingly strong plans, strategies, frameworks and data collection, but there are also benefits to having that national consistency. The National Plan provides that national framework, and being able to pick up those pieces and have nationally consistent data collection, definitions, outcomes, measures and frameworks means that it is not a postcode lottery, that we understand what is happening both in relation to perpetration as well as the experiences of all forms of violence across Australia regardless of where you live.

It also gives an opportunity to click into that national architecture. There are strong governance mechanisms and architecture around the National Plan both in terms of government and across government as well as with civil society and others through the National Plan Advisory Group, for example. Having a strategy or framework, as I mentioned, essentially is the third pillar of that National Plan, of that whole-of-population study. So the strategy at a national level would provide an opportunity to plug those gaps, give a level of consistency, of cooperation, and provide a blueprint and priorities for reform to guide government action. Governments have worked very well across states and territories, as we have seen through recent national cabinet discussions, so it really gives them the vehicle for that, and then complemented by the national perpetrator study. We know that there is a range of data at a state and territory level, we know there is some excellent future work being planned, including the ANROWS study I have mentioned, but a national perpetrator study gives us the opportunity to collect that at a national, whole-of-population scale to then inform—which does not mean it cannot be complemented by or supplemented by state or territory studies, and

in fact we can talk in a moment about sequencing and phasing given the work that is already in place, if that is useful. We do think absolutely there is value in having a national strategy and a study.

The CHAIR: Amanda, my next question was to ask you about how a national strategy would work in with some of those state-based strategies like we already have in Victoria, and I think you have done an excellent job of pre-empting what is on my mind. Is there anything else you would like to add about how in Victoria in particular we could work with a national strategy and a national study?

Amanda ALFORD: I think it is an excellent question, and I work closely with a range of state and territory governments to think about and understand the jurisdictional context, priorities, nuances in every jurisdiction, because every jurisdiction is different, but also how do we ensure essentially that the tide lifts all boats? How do we make sure we have a really complete national picture? So I think absolutely it is not an either/or, it is an 'and'—how do we have a national blueprint, national data at a whole-of-population level and use that? How can that complement what is happening at a state and territory level? In terms of phasing and work already underway, for example, the Michael Flood ANROWS piece of work, as I understand it, will be a pilot study focusing on New South Wales. There is absolutely no reason why, for example, in the first part of that study, which is analysis of existing datasets, there could not be collaboration across the Commonwealth and states and territories in relation to interrogation of existing datasets and then in relation to development of a survey instrument to collect perpetration data, why, for example, other states and territories could not learn from and use that survey instrument, tailor it absolutely to a jurisdiction-specific focus but ensure that national constituency. Is there anything that you wanted to add, Ebony?

Ebony KING: I think one of the benefits of having a national survey and a strategy and then having state-based is, as Amanda alluded to, the jurisdictional specificities. So one of the key things about having a survey that is population-level is that it really helps us understand patterns of violence—so moving away from incidence, which is what you get using administrative data, to understanding patterns of violence, so the who, what, when and why of violence: who does it, when do they do it, in what context and how? What forms of violence are being used? How is violence being co-perpetrated, or the co-occurrence of violence—so people who use multiple forms of violence, what are their trajectories of violence? What are the missing forms of violence? It is quite hard to capture that in incidence-based administrative data. So, for example, coercive control is quite difficult to measure if you are just looking at administrative data. And then also being able to identify the risk and protective factors. So are there things about the Victorian system, some of the ways in which we work, that are quite protective and help people either not use violence or stop using it once they have started, or are there things about our system that increase risk that we can do better to address? So I think having the Victorian focus would then be able to guide a strategy that is evidence based and tailored to Victoria and guide kind of resourcing decisions about where the support is most needed.

The CHAIR: Thank you. What I would like to go into in a bit more detail is some of that unreported family violence, in particular people who are not coming in contact with the justice system. Can you expand on how a national perpetration study would help form that understanding of people who are using violence but are not encountering the justice system?

Amanda ALFORD: I might start, and Ebony, I am sure in her expertise, will add to my response. We know that people who come into contact with justice, housing, child protection and other systems represent a small proportion of people who are either perpetrating or experiencing all forms of violence, so there is a real opportunity I think through a national perpetrator study to move beyond what is important and useful data collected in a whole range of ways through other datasets and get information about perpetration and about protective factors and about risk factors of cohorts who might not otherwise be captured by the net of the existing data systems. We know that there are methodological ways in which to ensure representative samples, to ensure that there is a demographic mix and there is a jurisdictional mix—there are obviously a range of characteristics—and really that national data would provide a fuller picture than we currently have.

Ebony KING: Absolutely. By its nature a population-level survey is capturing the whole population, a representative sample of that population, so it would be inclusive of people of all genders. For example, we know that some people are less likely to report certain types of abuse, so it would help to be able to capture, as we mentioned, things like coercive control, technology-facilitated abuse, women who use violence as well, or violence in the LGBTIQ+ community. That kind of focus will be supported through data disaggregation. We would be able to understand perpetration of different forms of violence, so physical violence, emotional abuse,

financial abuse and so forth. It would provide a more fulsome picture because you would be measuring the whole population and also asking questions in ways that elicit honest responses. One of the challenges particularly of face-to-face approaches is if they access a service, people are much less likely to disclose their behaviours. Having an online survey that asks questions in a way that elicits honest responses goes a long way for us developing a more accurate picture of the use of violence in Victoria but also nationally.

Amanda ALFORD: Building on that too, the other factor is much of the existing dataset is collected in the context of risk assessment, and we just need to be careful about data collected in the context of risk assessment as distinct from data collected for the purposes of understanding all of the nature and dynamics and prevalence of perpetration. As always, data is collected for various purposes and then used for various purposes, so it is just being really clear about the manner in which the data is collected, the context and purposes for which it is collected and then how it is used. Having this specific whole-of-population study gives us a real opportunity to understand the nuance and develop an instrument and then do the analysis in the context of better understanding perpetration specifically.

Ebony KING: It would also help in understanding geographical differences in Victoria. For example, are there different patterns across metro, regional and rural areas? That can also help with the guiding of resourcing decisions and help us understand if the patterns of violence are different in those areas. If some forms of violence are more prevalent, what services are available to them and what are the risk and protective factors? They might be quite different depending on geographic locations. That is the sort of data that you can get from a survey. Then it can most certainly be complemented by administrative and service system data, particularly if it is linked data. I think there are some real opportunities around linked data. It is quite difficult—it can be quite expensive—but an enormous opportunity as well. There are some early indications from FSV and some early intervention projects where they have done linked data. It enables you a longitudinal focus on perpetration and use of violence over time. I think that is the other key piece: people can use different forms of violence at different life stages. We know that young men might start perpetrating sexual violence when they are in their teenage years, and if they do, they are most likely to continue that violence over the longer term. Some stop and some escalate their violence. So it would help us understand those sorts of patterns of how things might change over the life course. And do people stop using at a certain time? Also, do some people just focus on family violence and they do not perpetrate sexual violence? Are some people perpetrating multiple forms of violence? It would help us then tailor those responses so that they are actually being meaningful and we are addressing the character and nature of violence and where it is perpetrated.

The CHAIR: On linked data, do you think it is possible to link data collected in a national perpetrator study to data collected by Victorian services, such as courts and police?

Amanda ALFORD: That is probably for you. It is also probably one that we could take on notice and provide slightly more detail on. But did you want to start?

Ebony KING: Yes, it is tricky. I mean, if you get into the real techy side of things, you need the same counting rules. You need to have comparable data that is collected in the same types of ways. You might be able to compare and talk about them in the same ways and how they might reflect on one another, but they might not necessarily be linkable in that way, and I think the data architecture for the national plan is still really being built. It is a massive project, I would imagine, to link these, but that is not to say it cannot be done. So we will take that one on notice and get back to you.

The CHAIR: That would be great. If you want to come back to us with some detail on that, about how it could be done, that would be really beneficial to us.

Ebony KING: Yes. It is a big question, isn't it?

The CHAIR: It is. It is a very big question. Thanks. Annabelle.

Annabelle CLEELAND: Thank you. Thank you for your time as well. Every speaker is always mind-blowing. But being a state inquiry, your major recommendation is a national strategy and study. Could it be effective as a backup to have a state strategy and study? I think that is something that we should focus on rather than trying to summon the federal government to act on something in this particular study. What are the opportunities but also maybe the limitations of just having a state study and strategy?

Amanda ALFORD: I think it is absolutely possible, and there is an opportunity to have a national study as well as state and territory studies. As we have said, there is no active consideration that we are aware of, of a national strategy or study. Given the leadership role the Victorian Government and Victoria have shown in this space, I think there is absolutely an opportunity to develop a Victorian strategy and study. I think there are enough hooks or elements under development in the national space that doing that in collaboration across jurisdictions with your cross-jurisdictional colleagues could be really valuable. And absolutely, given this is a relatively new area in terms of some of the questions that we are discussing around perpetration, I know through working across states and territories that many jurisdictions use the learnings and reflections from the work that has been happening in Victoria to then inform the work they are doing.

Similarly, I am sure that the reflections and learnings from developing a strategy and developing a study at a national level would have implications. I would not underestimate the value of states and territories collaboratively working together to push national reform and demonstrate the value given there are indications of ongoing recognition by the Commonwealth and other state and territory governments of the data gaps here. I suppose we would continue to encourage Victoria's engagement with your cross-jurisdictional colleagues and the Commonwealth government about the value of a national strategy and study but also encourage you to go ahead in the meantime in any event in terms of developing a strategy and a study but doing it in a collaborative cross-jurisdictional way and learning from the work that is happening in other jurisdictions—learning, for example, from the ANROWS study and identifying opportunities to collaborate where that is possible.

Ebony KING: Could I add something? Sorry, I did not mean to interrupt your question. From my experience of working in the Victorian Government they have not really waited around for the federal government to act on family violence, and the Victorian survey could act as a precedent or a basis. It is a really good opportunity to pilot something that might end up becoming a national study that could potentially supersede a state-based study. I think in the context of Victoria, the Third Rolling Action Plan is being released this year. The Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor has provided the recommendations around the royal commission. The royal commission recommendations have all been implemented, all 227 of them, so now it is the next phase for Victoria of what is next. We have done this huge amount of reform, so the next piece of that puzzle, having built on the incredible work around victim-survivors, is then focusing on how we work with people who use violence. I had heard so many times, working at Family Safety Victoria, 'If only we had better data around perpetration.' Particularly for people developing men's behaviour change programs but across the spectrum, including primary prevention, that data is a real gap, and it really limits our ability to effectively do this work.

Annabelle CLEELAND: We have heard about some of the limitations of particularly men coming through the justice system, circling back through and repeat offending but not being able to identify why. Tell us from your perspective about those barriers between the judicial data and the state or service collection of data and the inability to share between them, as it seems from my perspective anyway.

Ebony KING: It is a really challenging one. I think across multiple areas of government there is a real challenge with sharing data. But I think in relation to the examples you mentioned I will have to take that one on notice. I am not too familiar with the information sharing between the justice system and other systems, but I can get back to you on that.

Annabelle CLEELAND: Being the national leader in primary prevention, do you contribute data to a database currently?

Amanda ALFORD: We play a range of roles. We collect data ourselves primarily for the purposes of reporting on Our Watch's own work. We are funded under the second National Plan, for example, so we have a Performance Evaluation Framework and report on both outputs under our Activity Work Plans to the Department of Social Services but also on outcomes under our Performance Evaluation Framework, which includes collection of data about, for example, how many people we are engaging with, how people's confidence in taking action changed after engaging in a community of practice or in training or something of that nature. So certainly we contribute to and we are in discussion with the Department of Social Services about any contribution we might make to the national data picture, but I suppose it is very much from the position of the data derived from the work that we do as distinct from national, whole-of-population datasets.

In some instances, particularly at the moment, where there are data gaps and opportunities, there might be, for example, a national population dataset in some areas and there might be state or territory or other datasets in other areas—so we might be using the Man Box study or other pieces of data to give you a complete picture. In others still there might be the need for a short- to medium-term proxy, so we are having discussions about ‘Are there any opportunities for us to provide data in a proxy-type sense?’ But we are not really comparing apples with apples through provision of the data, so we are not a data custodian as such in the same way that the ABS and others are.

Ebony KING: We are providing data for three measures under the National Plan Performance Measurement Plan as well, but again it is focused on Our Watch’s work as opposed to data for across Australia.

Annabelle CLEELAND: And how do you find IRIS? You do not contribute to IRIS?

Amanda ALFORD: No.

Ebony KING: No.

Annabelle CLEELAND: Okay. So with the information you are providing, it just goes to the department?

Amanda ALFORD: It goes to the Department of Social Services for the purposes of reporting and acquitting our funding under the National Plan, and then we provide reporting to each state and territory government—in this case to the Victorian Government for the provision of the funding that we receive from the Victorian Government for being a member of Our Watch.

Ebony KING: And separately to that, under the National Plan Performance Measurement Plan. So it is basically under the outcomes framework and then it is how we are actually going to measure the outcomes framework. We contribute to that as well, so outside of a government funding scenario, we contribute to data for the national monitoring of progress in reducing violence against women.

Amanda ALFORD: The other contribution we make to the data landscape in addition to actual provision of data is, for example, we sit on the working or advisory groups for the Personal Safety Survey, for the National Community Attitudes Survey, for the outcomes frameworks both at a Commonwealth and a state and territory level and have ongoing discussion with governments about ‘Okay, if this is your outcomes framework, here are your measures and your indicators. How do you make sure that we are properly measuring primary prevention?’ drawing on some of our key documents, *Counting on Change* and *Tracking Progress and Prevention* in particular. So it is both a provision of data specifically but also advice and guidance and interaction in relation to data gaps, opportunities—the broader landscape of data collection—and advice again, bringing that primary prevention lens to those questions.

Annabelle CLEELAND: We are all imagining a shared database in Victoria, being a bit parochial. How do you see that operating, and what data in and out would contribute to your work in particular and make it more successful?

Amanda ALFORD: In terms of primary prevention, there are a number of categories and types of data that we would encourage collection of. For example, looking at the gendered drivers of violence against women, there are certain measures and indicators related to women’s public participation in political life—representation on boards, proportion of housework and caring responsibilities and those kinds of broader gendered measures. There are also then more specific measures in relation to primary prevention as well as attitudes on a whole range of things.

We work quite closely with Respect Victoria, as the Victorian prevention organisation. For example, we are engaged in the discussions as part of their thinking about what an outcomes framework might look like. So it would probably be through that provision of advice and guidance about ‘Okay, if we’re going to look at primary prevention and what works and how we track progress in prevention in our experience across jurisdictions and drawing on the evidence base, what are the measures and indicators that are going to best demonstrate progress in primary prevention as distinct from specific provision of the data in and of itself?’

Is there anything you wanted to add to that?

Ebony KING: I think the distinction is that we are not a service delivery organisation. There are certain types of data that we might use to inform our training programs and our evidence base, which we are continuously staying on top of. So we will do future iterations of *Change the Story*, and future data will be used to inform that. But we are not a service delivery organisation, so we do not use things like IRIS, for example. The types of granular service system data most likely in some cases would not necessarily be something that we would draw on. But as Amanda mentioned, there are certainly things that we do, and the Respect Victoria data portal provides an indication of some of the types of data that we do use in the primary prevention space. That is the data portal developed with the Crime Statistics Agency and kind of consolidates a whole range of different population-level work, but again, perpetrators are the gap. So that is the type of data that we would use, not so much the nitty-gritty service system data.

Annabelle CLEELAND: You can take this on notice because it is definitely someone else's turn, but looking globally, is there any example where a survey or strategy has worked really effectively that we can model the effectiveness of?

Amanda ALFORD: There is a little bit of work internationally. For example—and we can take on notice and provide you more information about this—there is a multi-country study which provides some information of that. That is a UN multi-country study focused on the Asia-Pacific. Emma Fulu and others have been involved in developing that. So that would be one example. There are then some smaller scale studies across particularly North America largely focused in kind of university contexts in particular, so again we can provide information on that. I also note that people like Professor Michael Flood and others would be able to provide additional information on those. Is there anything you wanted to add?

Ebony KING: I think that captures most of it. I think there is interest in Canada in the New South Wales pilot perpetrator study, for example, so I think there is a lot of interest. But as we have found with Victoria and the work that was done with the royal commission, internationally Victoria is looked to as a leader in this space, particularly in terms of primary prevention. We have a lot of interest from international stakeholders as well about the work that we do, so I think that this is another example of the way that Australia can be leading.

Amanda ALFORD: It is an important reminder—we do get a lot of interest from other countries about Australia's approach to primary prevention. Obviously the Victorian context has been leading that both in terms of infrastructure as well as service delivery, investment and work across all parts of the continuum. It is something that we are continually asked. And Our Watch plays a role in terms of providing information to other countries, to UN and other type forums—so, for example, we co-presented to the recent World Health Summit. Those kinds of engagements, as Ebony has indicated, really underscore the importance of staying the course and taking that next step in relation to primary prevention, because there is now incredible longitudinal data and value and experience, particularly in Victoria, in terms of understanding what works, what might work better and providing information to other countries—but also acknowledging, though, we can learn an incredible amount from other countries and the approaches they can take. It is a two-way street.

The CHAIR: Great. Thanks, Annabelle. Chris.

Chris CREWETHER: Sorry, Chair, can I just add a quick supplementary to her question?

The CHAIR: Yes.

Chris CREWETHER: Just on your UN multi-country study, is there a particular country that stood out, or are there particular countries that stood out?

Amanda ALFORD: I think it was across six countries and about 30,000 people. I am not aware of the details of that. But we can take that on notice, and we certainly encourage engagement with Professor Flood, Emma Fulu and others who would have more detail on that.

Chris CREWETHER: No worries. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thanks. Christine.

Chris COUZENS: Thank you for your time today—we really appreciate it—and for your submission. In terms of the national study that has been referred to, not all states are equal in terms of where they are up to. Do you see that as being challenging to getting adequate data?

Amanda ALFORD: It is a really good recognition that every state and territory is at a different place on the prevention journey. I travel around Australia and I am working with every state and territory, and absolutely there are some jurisdictions who have invested over a long period of time and have a lot of data and a lot of primary prevention infrastructure, like Victoria. There are others who are really at the beginning of that journey, and there are others who are somewhere in the middle in terms of having domestic family sexual violence plans or strategies, some data and infrastructure but also developments in key policy areas. For example, the Queensland Government now has very strong architecture, strategies and plans and increasing data and have done particular work, for example, in relation to Respectful Relationships Education.

Also, though, as we have mentioned, I think there is incredible benefit in having a national framework and national studies for that national consistency to add to that third pillar of the NCAS and the Personal Safety Survey in terms of that whole-of-population data but also to get the input and nuance from each jurisdiction, because the survey instrument, for example, that Professor Flood will develop for the New South Wales pilot will undoubtedly provide a useful basis upon which other jurisdictions or nationally we can draw, but it will also need to be tailored and nuanced for every jurisdiction because there are geographical population demographic and other differences. We also know that in working, for example, with some of the smaller states and territories there are real opportunities for small jurisdictions to be flexible and nimble and to pilot things in ways that some of the broader jurisdictions cannot. An overarching national strategy which then, for example, identifies priorities in this area and has a nuanced discussion about ‘Okay, in Victoria, here’s an opportunity for the Victorian Government to lead on these elements. Actually, ACT or Tasmania, you’re a small jurisdiction, you’re nimble, you could do a pilot in these smaller areas that could contribute to building the national evidence base’—I think is really useful but also means we are not reinventing the wheel.

Inevitably we get asked questions by state and territory governments about ‘What’s the latest evidence on X? What other jurisdictions have done Y?’ So being able to draw out those differences and collectively build a national picture, while acknowledging that all states and territories are different and all states and territories have different levels of investment available as a proportion of their overall state or territory budget, does mean that, as I mentioned earlier, the tide can lift all boats.

Ebony KING: I have one thing to add. I think one of the benefits of a survey is that it is independent of the data collection systems in a jurisdiction, including the administrative data and also the differences in definitions and terminology used in legislation, for example. It also applies to the NCAS and the Personal Safety Survey. They are both national surveys, but they are done all over Australia. One of the benefits is then it is able to pick up these differences between jurisdictions and figure out what is consistent, what might be different and what might be the reason for those. The National Plan and the gender equality strategy are also national documents, but Victoria also has state-level family violence and gender equality strategies. I think there is precedent for doing this type of work. They can serve complementarily but are unique in the sense that they have got different levers available to them and they can have a state-based focus—whereas you have a national focus for a national strategy—and they can work together to be mutually reinforcing.

Amanda ALFORD: As I mentioned, the Commonwealth and every state and territory government are members of Our Watch. We regularly bring what are called our Member Representatives—so a senior representative from the government in each jurisdiction—together to share reflections, to share ideas. Both that, national cabinet and a range of other mechanisms to us have really demonstrated the commitment of all governments from every jurisdiction and in a multipartisan way to addressing these issues and to working collaboratively both at a ministerial level but also at a departmental and officer level.

Chris COUZENS: How can the Victorian government prioritise First Nations data sovereignty, and how should it be built into both service delivery data collection and broader studies, research and, in particular, the Closing the Gap agreement?

Amanda ALFORD: It is a really important question and is something we were quite conscious of making sure we included as part of our submission. We think it is really important in all of this to recognise the principles of Indigenous data sovereignty from the ANROWS statement and from community-controlled

organisations, ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people both have input into the way in which data is collected, into the methodologies and into the survey designs in that co-design approach. I understand from discussions with Professor Flood—and absolutely please feel free to ask him the questions as well—there is a real commitment to thinking about how both the broader project but also the instruments are designed, the way in which the questions are framed, the language that is used in those instruments and the contexts to ensure that they are asked appropriately and in a culturally safe and appropriate way. But also—and it is so often the missing piece—it is about how the data is not only collected and used but then what the feedback loop and mechanisms are.

Rather than taking an extractive approach to data collection, it is about thinking about how, working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations and communities, the data can then be provided to those communities to use for their purposes. They can be part of creating the solutions moving forward and drawing on the other structures, agreements and processes, including in Victoria, in terms of deciding the actions, the investments and the decisions that the data is being informed by. That is a really important part—as well as, more broadly, taking an intersectional approach to the data and being really aware of the potential nuances of that data, the need for contextualisation, the need for analysis so that we, for example, are not stigmatising any one particular group. We know, for example, at the moment that because there is a data gap that is filled by administrative datasets which are skewed to particular population groups, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's engagement with the justice system, we are seeing perpetration patterns and data in ways that are not necessarily representative. So actually having a broader survey gives us a better opportunity to look at the scale, nature and dynamics of perpetration generally but also understand the risk and protective factors which are specific to communities in many respects. And so it is understanding what it is, what those targeted interventions are that are going to help stop perpetration at every stage and at every part of the life course, again hand in hand with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Ebony, did you want to add to that?

Ebony KING: Excellent job, Amanda. I would only add that I think we need to take the lead from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations and experts. At the ANROWS second national research conference, the Warawarni-gu Guma Healing Together Statement said that data sovereignty approaches are essential for ending violence against women in their communities. This is for, as Amanda said, a range of reasons. Some of the key ones are recognising the historical legacies of colonialism and the impact that has had on distrust in services, for example. So having something that does not have the kind of legacies of that distrust and difficult relationship might be a better way to try and capture some of this data. As Amanda mentioned, unique risk and protective factors are really important to understand as well. Having local disaggregation is also really important. One of the key challenges is that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are not homogenous; there are a lot of differences across the country and across Victoria as well. We need to have data that Aboriginal communities can actually use to design their interventions that are relevant and meaningful to their communities, and that is something that needs to come from them. We know from evidence of other interventions that when it is driven by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, the outcomes are generally better.

Amanda ALFORD: There is also a real opportunity in the development of the first standalone plan to prevent violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and children at that national level to think about what pieces of the puzzle are missing. What is the infrastructure, what is the data that is needed? I understand they are having discussions like this at the moment, and I think, it is a really important feed into those discussions.

I also see that the Committee is hearing evidence from Djirra and National Women's Alliance and other organisations. Of course, as always, we are a non-Aboriginal community controlled organisation. We are absolutely committed to taking an intersectional approach but also encourage absolutely listening to and valuing and being guided by the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community controlled organisations themselves.

Ebony KING: And we need data for pillar 4 of Closing the Gap in particular. There is a real lack in that, and it is really going to be quite difficult to be able to measure progress unless we have that data.

Chris COUZENS: Great. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thanks, Chris. Heang.

Meng Heang TAK: Thank you, Chair. In your submission you say there is a need for data and to explore the connections between the attitudes and values of the perpetrator—for example, the adherence between the socially dominant forms and family violence. Can you elaborate more on that, please?

Ebony KING: We know, for example, that there are some forms of attitudes that are more strongly correlated with violence use. For example, men who adhere to really rigid ideas of what it is to be a man are more likely to use various forms of violence, including intimate partner violence, as well as have negative health outcomes for themselves. They are much more likely to have substance abuse issues, mental health challenges and so forth. So we know from the gendered drivers that at a societal level there are particular types of attitudes that we mentioned. Evidence supports that they are related to violence use and that internationally and in Australia where these attitudes are more prevalent violence rates are higher. So, for example, there are four gendered drivers that are identified in *Change the Story*. The first is the condoning of violence against women, so it is things like in the newspaper where it has ‘A woman was murdered’ rather than ‘A man has murdered a woman’, for example. The agency is removed, or there is a subtle condoning of violence, or dismissing. So, ‘Oh, it’s not that bad’ or ‘If it was really bad, she would leave’—those types of attitudes. There are also male peer relations that emphasise aggression, dominance and control and are quite hostile towards women. That is another driver. There are limits to women’s independence in public and private spaces as well, and then dominant forms of masculinity where men are rigidly adhering to them, and gender stereotypes in general, also applying those to women. They are the types of attitudes that we know of. If somebody is condoning violence, if they adhere to these ideas of being a man, that you have to be in control and dominant, then violence is much more likely to occur. It is the same with limiting women’s independence—so financial abuse and so forth is more strongly correlated with those types of attitudes. Having an understanding of how these relate is really important, and we have got some initial inroads into this through the *Man Box* study, which was done by Jesuit Social Services and Respect Victoria in Victoria—so it is Victorian data—and that showed the connection between the gendered drivers and violence perpetration in that research, which was really exciting to see the evidence behind that. So they are the kinds of things that we are talking about in relation to attitudes of violence perpetration.

Meng Heang TAK: Okay. I guess that is all, Chair. Thank you.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Jackson.

Jackson TAYLOR: Yes. Thank you. Thank you for coming along today and thank you for your very detailed submission. My question has been covered a little bit—it has probably been covered in detail in different parts of today’s hearing, but I wanted to ask directly—you talked about the limited national, state and territory level data collection in relation to the perpetration of family violence. I want to ask: in your view, what is not being collected and how would you collect it?

Amanda ALFORD: Do you want to start with what is not being collected, and then I can go to how we might improve that?

Ebony KING: Sure. So, the prevalence data is not being collected. We collect prevalence on victimisation through the PSS, but we do not measure prevalence of violence perpetration. So at a whole-of-population level we do not know how many people are using violence and what forms of violence they are using, so that is a really key gap. Other gaps are, again, around coercive control or more pattern-based forms of violence, so things that might not be picked up in a single incident, for example. We need to get better at that form of violence and other forms of violence that might be less obvious. As SASVic before us mentioned, there are gaps around sexual violence as well, and also gaps in relation to children and young people, LGBTIQ+ communities—so, for example, we do not really understand much of the dynamics in LGBTIQ+ relationships and the use of violence. There is some initial evidence, but there is much more data needed to understand that and the dynamics of it, and in particular culturally and linguistically diverse communities as well. So there are these cohort questions around data gaps—who is using violence, when are they using it and why, and the patterns of that, so again around that question of trajectories of violence. We do not really understand when somebody starts using it and when they stop using it what might encourage them to stop or start and the

contextual factors there, and also the question around protective factors. We understand risk factors a lot better than we do protective factors. It is often the way with research—you kind of get a sense of what the things are that might make this more likely, but we do not have as much data around what are the things that make it less likely. What is it about somebody's relationships, their environment, their workplaces or their context more broadly that makes them less likely to use violence, and if they do use it, to stop using it? I think that is a really key piece of the puzzle that would help us really direct our efforts and make sure that they are most effective, because we are providing the context that helps people not use violence, basically.

Amanda ALFORD: And then in relation to 'how would we collect it?', I think there are probably a number of ways. As we referred to earlier, we think there is real value in having a national perpetrator study. Again, the methodology is probably twofold, which would mirror the Flood methodology, which is analysing existing data across jurisdictions in terms of what we are already collecting, and then the second is developing a new survey instrument. For example, if Victoria was going to do some work on a perpetrator study, there would be opportunities at the national level then to learn and build on that instrument as well as from the Flood research. I think importantly it is not an either/or situation. The other component to that is improving the existing data that is being collected, so in terms of greater national consistency, but within Victoria as well, reducing fragmentation of data, improved linkage and analysis, as Ebony has mentioned, but also complementing that with evaluations with ongoing understanding of what is working and what is not working so that you have got that full data picture overall.

Ebony KING: That is a very good point. Remiss of me, considering my PhD was in qualitative research, is that we need qualitative data as well to really pick up the flavour and the context and the nuance. Raw data can provide us a lot of great information, but qualitative approaches really help us understand more fully why violence is happening and what contributes to that—tricky to do in this sort of space, but as with any type of research there are always challenges and limitations and risks to it, so you just have to be very clever in the way that you design the qualitative elements of this research. As Amanda mentioned, program data and evaluations—it is really hard. Say, the men's behaviour change programs or men and boys work that we do in primary prevention, trying to understand whether they are effective or not is a really key piece, because it takes government resourcing and funding behind them, so we want to make sure that that money is being used wisely. The program- and evaluation-level data is really key to that piece of the puzzle as well. So there are the administrative elements and the linked data and the opportunities that happen there, the programmatic and evaluation data, and then survey data, and they all kind of provide a more comprehensive understanding.

Amanda ALFORD: I think the other final thing to note is in terms of 'data about what?' and ensuring that we are sufficiently clear whether it is about family violence, or whether it is about domestic, family and sexual violence. In our submission—and I heard earlier in our colleagues' evidence—there are absolutely benefits to taking a broad approach to the definition so that you are capturing all forms of violence against women. In the context of sexual violence, for example, sexual violence that both occurs within intimate but also outside intimate partner relationships and contexts, but also in terms of child sexual abuse, filicide and other contexts—so being really clear about what is the scope, what is the definition of the nature of the data that we are collecting is the other consideration in terms of the how.

Jackson TAYLOR: Thank you. Just very briefly—data linkage opportunities—what are a couple of the ones that you see as really obvious?

Ebony KING: Linking crime or, say, police, justice, housing, other types of service data is really quite helpful because then you can track an individual, a community, a family through multiple different forms of data, and you can measure over time. Just say in the Victorian government there was an early intervention program—I think it was called 'early intervention for young men at risk of perpetrating violence'—and that used data linkage which was quite an innovative approach. It meant that when a young person had finished the program, they were then able to track them post-engagement to see whether they reoffended, whether they are changing their behaviours, and if they are engaged in the service system, is it violence related, is it other issues, which again speaks to risk and protective factors. So those are the sort of opportunities, particularly around efficacy. Are we able to make a difference in the work that we are doing? Linked data provides an opportunity to do that.

Jackson TAYLOR: Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

Amanda ALFORD: More broadly, as a national organisation—and we have made reference to this—there is the real value of national consistency. Inevitably we have conversations with each state and territory about the work that they are doing, the data they are collecting, the frameworks and the interventions that they are making. But to ensure that real national whole-of-population view so that we can be clear about what is working and what is not working, be really clear about the effectiveness of investment by governments—but also because there is no one solution to preventing violence against women and children—we need all parts of the system to work together. We need multi-pronged and mutually reinforcing solutions, and we need to do it at a national level, and data is an important piece of the puzzle.

Jackson TAYLOR: Thanks, Chair.

The CHAIR: I would like to expand on something Jackson mentioned just around qual data, and you are welcome to take this notice if you like, but I am wondering if you can identify some of those opportunities for the Victorian government when it comes to better qual data collection and use.

Ebony KING: It might be a take on notice one.

Amanda ALFORD: We might have to take that on notice.

Ebony KING: But, yes, really around the methodology, because we know that people are much less likely to disclose violence use if it is a face-to-face qualitative interview, but there is a lot of progress being made and really sophisticated ways of doing this work. So there has been some ground made, and we can refer to those studies in our written response, but, yes, it is a real challenge. I am a qualitative researcher, and there is just a level of detail that you get from those that you just cannot get from the numbers. Yes, it is a really important piece, but quite challenging. But it is not to say that it cannot be done, so we will get back to you on that one.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Chris.

Chris CREWETHER: I will just ask one question. Thanks for your evidence and submission. You would have heard earlier the evidence given by SASVic. They said that the Orange Door is not sufficiently taking into account sexual violence, that SASVic cannot train Orange Door workers, that there is a general lack of acknowledgement of sexual violence and that children are not being sufficiently asked about child sex abuse. Do you have any general thoughts or comments on that evidence, noting what they have said and your own perspective as well?

Amanda ALFORD: I think we heard that evidence. It is not necessarily appropriate for us as a national body that does not engage directly with Orange Door to comment on that. I suppose we would say, broadly speaking, that there absolutely has been a focus on domestic and family violence and sexual violence in the context of domestic and family violence over many years. An increased focus on sexual violence in and of itself is important, and it is something we would support, but it is not necessarily for us to make comment in relation to Orange Door specifically.

Chris CREWETHER: Thank you.

The CHAIR: Amanda and Ebony, thank you very much for appearing before the Committee today and for your contribution to this inquiry. It has been a very interesting discussion that we have had, so thank you again so much for your time today. We really appreciate you being here with us.

We will now take a short break until 12:55 pm before our next witnesses. Thank you.

Witnesses withdrew.