

# TRANSCRIPT

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES COMMITTEE

### **Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria**

Melbourne—Tuesday 6 August 2024

#### **MEMBERS**

Ella George – Chair

Annabelle Cleeland – Deputy Chair

Chris Couzens

Chris Crewther

Cindy McLeish

Meng Heang Tak

Jackson Taylor

#### **WITNESSES**

Tom Bowerman, Acting Executive Director, Services,

Tracey Golder, Program Manager, Specialist Family Violence,

Darrylin Galanos, Acting Manager, Client Analytics and Reporting, and

Jac Dwyer, Leader, Practice Development, Training and Capacity Building Projects,  
Berry Street.

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

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

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

The Committee recognises that evidence to this inquiry may be distressing, and we urge people to reach out for support. You can contact Lifeline on 13 11 14, 1800RESPECT or the Blue Knot helpline on 1300 657 380.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard and broadcast live. While all evidence taken by the Committee is protected by parliamentary privilege, comments repeated outside this hearing may not be protected by this privilege. Witnesses will be provided with a proof version of today's transcript to check, together with any questions taken on notice. Verified transcripts, responses to questions taken on notice and other documents provided during the hearing will be published on the Committee's website.

I am now pleased to welcome the team from Berry Street. We have Tracey Golder, Program Manager, Specialist Family Violence; Tom Bowerman, Acting Executive Director for Services; Darrylin Galanos, Acting Manager, Client Analytics and Reporting; and Jac Dwyer, Practice Development, Training and Capacity Building Projects. Welcome. I thank you for appearing before the Committee today, and I now invite you to make a statement of 5 to 10 minutes, and then we will have some questions from members.

**Tom BOWERMAN:** Thank you, Chair. I am going to take the lead and then hand to my colleagues. You did a good job of capturing our wide range of titles. We appreciate the opportunity to appear before this Committee. As you said, my name is Tom Bowerman, Acting Executive Director of Services at Berry Street.

We too want to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands, waterways and skies on which our sites and programs are operated across Victoria. We pay respects to elders past, present and emerging, and we acknowledge the victim-survivors of family violence, the majority of whom are women and children. The family violence sector was built by these victim-survivors and informed by their experiences and those who have not survived and those who have bravely shared their stories.

I am here today with my colleagues, as you have said: Tracey Golder, Program Manager for Specialist Family Violence programs in our western region. Tracey has held various leadership roles across the sector, co-facilitates men's behaviour change programs, including Caring Dads, perpetrator case management and Place for Change, and victim-survivor case management and the personal safety initiative and refuge. That is a lot.

To my left on the end, Jac Dwyer, Practice Development Leader for Training and Capacity Building, which includes MARAM Safe and Together training. Jac has worked across many specialisations in family violence and the community sector since 2009, supporting adult and children victim-survivors in the community as well as specialising now in practice development and training. Jac has been a MARAM collaborative practice trainer, has worked in partnership with the University of Melbourne's Safer Families team to facilitate the Pathways to Safety training program for GP clinics, is a Safe and Together lead certified trainer for Berry Street and operates out of our northern region office in Preston. And Darrylin, to my left, Acting Manager, as you said, of Client Analytics and Reporting, has worked with Berry Street in specialist family violence victim-survivor programs for eight years and has had a key role in our client information management and uplift project to really make sure that we are capturing data and have systems that are fit for purpose into the future, so having one client record management system across the organisation.

Just to give you a bit of background about Berry Street—as you mentioned, Berry Street is a big organisation—for 140 years we have provided essential services to children, young people and families, including supporting approximately 30,000 people across Victoria each year. Key programs include specialist family violence support services; education services—the Berry Street education model, the Berry Street school—trauma services, including the Victorian statewide therapeutic service Take Two; out-of-home care, including

residential care and foster care services; and parenting and family services. We are one of the largest providers of family violence services, offering specialist family violence support in the northern and southern regions of Melbourne and the Central Highlands, extending tailored recovery service for infants, children and young people across these areas and in the Mallee. We strive to ensure that every person experiencing family violence can access the support and safety that they need.

Berry Street is also experienced and committed and holds the conviction that we can and should engage with people using and at imminent risk of using violence. We currently provide programs, such as perpetrator case management, Place for Change and Caring Dads, for that cohort of men. Our service delivery aligns with the MARAM framework and adheres to the No to Violence minimum standards for men's behaviour change. Our practitioners demonstrate expertise in using MARAM practice guidelines to identify, assess and manage family violence risk with victim-survivors and perpetrators of family violence. They also possess extensive knowledge of the comprehensive guidance, particularly responsibilities 7 and 8, for working with adults using family violence. We prioritise the safety of women and children through dynamic risk assessment and are committed to engaging with people using violence and inviting them to examine their behaviour, take responsibility for the harm they cause and change those behaviours so that they and their families are free from the impact of family violence.

Since the royal commission, the Victorian Government has made significant investments in the prevention of and response to family violence, implementing the MARAM framework and critical information-sharing reforms. It is imperative that everyone plays a role in identifying, assessing and responding to family violence. Delivering a high-quality response, including effective data collection, depends on a workforce that is well informed about family violence. We recognise that all of our programs across the organisation may interact with victim-survivors and people who use violence. In acknowledgement of this responsibility, across the organisation, Berry Street is currently developing a comprehensive organisation-wide family violence strategy to talk to how we respond to family violence as an organisation. I am going to hand to Darrylin to just summarise some of our key recommendations.

**Darrylin GALANOS:** Thank you, Tom. We just wanted to highlight a couple of things in our opening statement that the panel can certainly expand on, if helpful. The first was around the recommendation for the development and implementation of outcome-focused measurements for the people who use violence services. Services are currently required to measure people using violence services by their outputs more so than their outcomes, and we know that it is vitally important to understand the impact of our interventions and the effectiveness—what works, what does not work. You have already heard about the limitations of the IRIS, which is the department's legacy system where people using violence programs report to. So the capture of any measurements that might be included would benefit from consideration from the Victorian Government's communities and families transformation program, which has been established to explore service system reform, and IRIS falls within the scope of that program.

The other recommendation was around resource allocation for capacity building. We need to build capacity across the workforce to properly identify, capture and share information about people using violence. There is a clear need for guidelines around proactive information sharing, and the appropriate channels for this information and consideration for this might be the people using violence services that are located at the Orange Doors.

Another recommendation was around accountability within the MARAM framework to incorporate support and accountability measures for prescribed organisations to embed MARAM and to ensure that alignment is understood as required—as mandatory rather than optional. And then, finally, for any dataset around people using violence we would encourage a place-based family violence informed analysis of perpetrator data to ensure that data that is used for strategic and funding purposes accurately reflects on-the-ground realities, and that is whether that is a national population survey or data that is collected at the local agency level or state level. So we can certainly expand on any of that.

Thank you, and I look forward to any questions from the Committee.

**The CHAIR:** Great. Thank you. Over to us now. The first question I have to you is just in relation to the early intervention strategy for young people that forms part of your submission. How could a statewide early intervention strategy for young people using violence enhance data collection, sharing and analysis?

**Darrylin GALANOS:** Please add anything, anyone, that you would like to, but I think it is an emerging area. I think when we were looking at this area there were inconsistencies around language—how we might refer to the young people using violence, whether we call it ‘violence’ or ‘communication of distress’. There was a lack of consistency around language. We would never refer to young people as perpetrators. A number of things that we thought about in a strategy would be incorporating a trauma-informed MARAM risk assessment that is specific for young people so that we can understand what is happening for and around that young person that is using violence. Within young people using violence there are adolescents using violence in the home currently, and there are programs to support that cohort, and there are young people using violence or aggressive behaviours in intimate partner relationships, so it is important that we are able to collect information and data around these different cohorts to be able to consider their needs.

We would also in thinking about an early intervention strategy need to consider that it is such a unique cohort. There are unique needs for young people using violence transitioning from the young people’s service provision into adulthood. We have young people that are 17 and being responded to as young people, but the day they turn 18 they are now being responded to by the adult service system.

We know that we need more funding for programs for young people using violence. For adolescents using violence in the home there are programs that are funded across the state, and Berry Street runs two of those programs, in the north and in the Mallee. Those programs—which I think are up for funding review next year, and we would certainly recommend that they be re-funded—have very long waitlists. We know in the north-east the waitlist is six months for the AVITH program and in Merri-bek three months, so we need to have more programs available for young people. Collecting data and knowing who and how many of this cohort there are can help us to think about what programs to fund. And there is certainly a paucity of programs relating to young people using violence in intimate partner relationships. That is an area that particularly in the regions is struggling for program support.

**Jac DWYER:** Just to add to that, because we have quite a large out-of-home residential care kind of offering at Berry Street we are really aware that there is a lack of resourcing for those young people who go into residential care impacted by an adult perpetrator’s pattern of behaviour. They find themselves in residential care and then are responded to in a trauma-informed way that is not necessarily violence informed. So it does not bring all of the information about what has happened to this young person and wrap around them to help them think about what next in their recovery, what next in terms of modelling those respectful behaviours to that young person and helping them understand what safe relationships look like. At Berry Street we did a pilot partnership of having an out-of-home care family violence practice adviser in our residential care services. We do not have ongoing funding for that, so it had to stop. So there are some little pieces of amazing practice where we can cross-pollinate across programs, and the focus of government on what Darrylin was saying before in terms of output not outcomes means that some of those creative solutions and promising emerging practice areas are not able to be progressed to the level that we would like them to be.

**The CHAIR:** Jac, can I pick up on your point that you are making around children in residential care who may have experienced family violence—is there any data being collected or data being analysed about children in residential care who may be experiencing family violence?

**Jac DWYER:** Really good question. What we know is that there is a whole bunch of services that are prescribed to MARAM—under the multi-agency risk assessment and management framework—and I guess there is a level of system uplift that is required that is not quite there yet. So the people who are capturing that data are relying on 450 pages of victim-survivor practice guides and a similar amount of adults using violence practice guides. The child and young person practice guides are not quite released yet. We have been working on them. I know that we have been participating in a lot of those workshops and they are not out yet, so there is a lot of: do we implement something now knowing that it is likely to change on release of those practice guides by the Victorian Government or do we wait and have a planned rollout of what comes next? I do not know whether that answered your question.

**Tom BOWERMAN:** If I can just say something on the question of whether there is data about young people in residential care or out-of-home care as a whole and their experience of family violence. Anecdotally I think we would say a large percentage of those young people have come from households where that is a factor. But is there actual data? Not necessarily. I think that is one of the gaps potentially. The better data we have, particularly around children and young people, can help to drive what services we need to meet those

needs and can help respond to that. What therapeutic support, what training, what support is needed for staff to better be able meet the comprehensive needs of those children?

**The CHAIR:** I appreciate it is quite a broad area to be asking questions about—the data and analysis around children in residential care who have experienced family violence and what has been collected and what has been assessed—but if there is anything you think would be relevant to the Committee in that area, if you would like to take that on notice to provide to us at a later date, that would be appreciated.

**Tom BOWERMAN:** I can take that. on notice. I asked one of our senior managers last week, and they said probably all of them; like anecdotally that was their take on that. At any one point we would have over a hundred children in out-of-home care just in Berry Street alone.

**The CHAIR:** Who have experienced family violence?

**Jac DWYER:** Anecdotally it was like probably all the kids that we care for, but we can go back and look at the data and give you a bit more of a data lens on that.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you. Jackson.

**Jackson TAYLOR:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you very much for coming along today and answering our questions. My question is: your submission notes the quality and accessibility of the data captured on persons using violence are dependent on four key elements: the framework and models used in programs, the expectations of the agency, the capacity of the systems to adequately hold and report on the data and, finally, practitioner resourcing, expertise and judgement. How can the Victorian Government support organisations to develop these four elements?

**Jac DWYER:** This is me, I think. I guess one of the things that we have noticed is that there is a lot of information that is accessible to services that are prescribed to MARAM, but the resourcing around that uplift, of people actually knowing what to do, is not quite there. In our Safe & Together training we have been training people across the state to help them lift their family violence-informed practice so that they better understand what is happening behind the person that is presenting to them. What we have found throughout this training is that a lot of people in non-specialist family violence roles—which, if we are thinking about MARAM, we are thinking about a whole workforce—are not in specialist family violence roles. This is almost the first time that they are really being asked to do this type of work, and there is a lot of nervousness, so people are really worried about escalating the risk if they do something and it goes wrong. We know that people using violence can escalate behaviours when their behaviours are in view of the service system. So we have got a lot of people who are now prescribed to do the work without adequate resourcing to support them to feel confident to do so safely. So we would say: resource the uplift.

**Jackson TAYLOR:** Thank you very much. Thanks, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Anything further, Jackson?

**Jackson TAYLOR:** That is all, thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Great. Annabelle.

**Annabelle CLEELAND:** I might ask this one on notice, because it sounds like it is across the board. You spoke about the increased funding for child and family service programs. Can you just list, I guess, the deadlines, what is up for funding, what you need supported if there is any reach and assessment on the effectiveness, also including anyone that has lapsed that had been really effective because they have not been funded? We would really appreciate that. That is a bit loaded. And I also might—are you okay with that?

**Tom BOWERMAN:** Yes, we will take that on notice.

**The CHAIR:** Can I just make a suggestion here. Where possible, just letting us know where it relates to the terms of reference to the inquiry would be helpful, thank you.

**Annabelle CLEELAND:** I guess that for me it is related to the inquiry because it is touchpoints in the system, so that even if the data is not collected yet, it will show us where we can identify children or families that might be touching the system where we could be accessing data—so it might lead you to that one.

I am interested to know about your perpetrator mapping tool, and if you could just speak about and explain that and whether there are opportunities to sort of roll that out and adopt it more broadly across the state?

**Jac DWYER:** This is me again.

**Tom BOWERMAN:** This is you again.

**Jac DWYER:** This is a Safe & Together tool. Safe & Together is a model that came from North America, created by David Mandel. We are certified Safe & Together trainers at Berry Street, and we provide the training internally to Berry Street staff and externally across the state. One of the things that has come out of the model is a perpetrator mapping tool, which supports us to understand I guess the pattern of behaviour. The way that MARAM is interpreted—sometimes as the risk assessment—is as kind of a has-this-ever-happened checkbox, move on, rather than understanding the full pattern of behaviour, including how the person who is using violence will respond if a victim-survivor does X. So that is really useful for us to hold in mind when we are safety planning with victim-survivors. It is perpetrator data. Its use is really important for victim-survivor, adult and child victim-survivor, support. It is useful for the service system as well.

And I think about some of the systems abuse stuff that has come through so far—and we were watching Vincent speak from Thorne Harbour before—and one of the things that the perpetrator mapping tool is really good at is helping to really uncover what coercive control looks like, how adult and child victim-survivors are very attuned to the person using violence's pattern of behaviour, to the point where they can tell when breathing is different. They start to look and know. And what that means is that the service system response to victim-survivors, who are making decisions based on things that would not be visible or known by other people who are not living with that pattern of behaviour all the time—if we are documenting that really clearly, then that becomes a better basis from which to start intervening. So we think MARAM and the perpetrator mapping tool kind of go together to create a really robust strategy across information sharing entities or MARAM-prescribed organisations to work out what to do next.

**Tracey GOLDER:** I think in particular it is really useful to centre the child in the intervention too. I think it really enhances having children in view as victim-survivors in their own right.

**Jac DWYER:** Yes. Thank you.

**Annabelle CLEELAND:** I was so enthralled I forgot where I was going with that. I guess something we are struggling with is the how. If we were to look at a database, what would that look like, and what are the unintended consequences of this shared information and more accessible information, with misidentification and lots of other challenges?

You just referenced David Mandel. Looking internationally, have you seen where it might work better or any guidance that you can give us on a how—what that statewide database might look like?

**Jac DWYER:** I think it is tricky, because this is emerging practice. I know that we have been talking in the lead-up to this about Victoria leading the way in family violence response. There has been an injection of funding, and we are kind of walking out on the precipice and trying to figure out what comes next. And I think that in the years since MARAM was released, we have learned so much, and there is every opportunity that in the next five years we are going to be learning more—five to eight years if I am using similar amounts of time. But one of the things that I think about is that the perpetrator training, the training for adults using violence, has been around for less than a year, so the service system is not quite equipped to respond well and to make sense of what it means to be doing this work yet. I wish that I had a really gold standard model. I wish that we as a panel could provide that, but some of it we will know when we test things. And I think that—do you want to take over?

**Tom BOWERMAN:** Seamless.

**Tracey GOLDER:** I think whatever platform we use—and we were listening to Vincent there before—there is information there, and we do not have access to the information we need to provide safety for women and children and the men who are using violence. So having a system that is accessible by the service providers, the core businesses providing this intervention—the information is there and it takes too long to get it, and that means that we cannot respond to risk.

**Annabelle CLEELAND:** Which brings me, Darrylin, to your comment about outputs not outcomes. I think they were three loaded words, or that was just a pretty loaded statement, actually—ouch. With the information you are providing, what databases are you using and what would you like to access to make your job more effective?

**Darrylin GALANOS:** We use a number of databases for our funding streams. We use IRIS for the people using violence programs and for the therapeutic family violence programs, which was designed as a child and family services database. We use SHIP, which is a specialist homelessness service, for the bulk of our specialist family violence services, which was designed for homelessness. And we also report into DEX, which is the Department of Social Services database, and that is from federal funding. We use RISS for the RAMP database. We do have some limited access to CIP to be able to make CIP requests. I just noticed you mentioned that before. And we have just recently done a client management uplift project to be able to move all of our programs onto one platform, which is SRS, which is the platform that SHIP is built from, basically. So we are trying to bring together all of our services recording similar information. MARAM is built into SHIP for adult and child victim-survivors but not for the adult using violence MARAM tool, and there is no young persons tool for that. So we have this kind of disparate bunch of databases that we are reporting to. All of them capture some information on perpetrator data and do not really speak to each other, but our SRS system kind of sits across all of that. What would we like to be able to see? I do not know what is going to be the best.

**Tracey GOLDER:** For me, sitting firmly in practice, I spend a huge amount of time trying to extract data from all the different programs I manage and getting it to the place where it needs to go. Particularly with the people using violence programs, that data does not actually inform practice. None of that data tells us how to engage men using violence, what is going to work or why they have entered the system. Obviously it is their use of family violence, but what has informed that, what are the drivers behind that, what are the intersecting factors? We do capture some of that but not nearly enough to inform the intervention. And then what we actually report on is who turns up and how much money we spend on them. We do not measure outcomes at all.

**Annabelle CLEELAND:** My time is up, but can I ask on notice, if possible: is there any sort of risk associated with a database that includes adult and youth perpetrators? I am sorry to say that, Darrylin—‘users of violence’, I should say. If you can see anything that you would see as a database best for better outcomes for you.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Annabelle. Heang, over to you.

**Meng Heang TAK:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you for your presentation. I guess my question is to Darrylin. Your submission notes a need for clear communication from government about whose responsibility it is to receive proactive information and share reports. That is to address challenges associated with service providers needing to know which services people using violence are engaging with to request information. Can you expand on what the Victorian Government could do to address this area? It is a long question.

**Darrylin GALANOS:** I am going to deftly pass that to Jac.

**Jac DWYER:** One of the things that we have got at the moment is a whole-of-system responsibility for responding to people who are using violence. They are being trained in how to identify people who are using violence and then they are not sure what to do with the information when they have got it. There are tools within MARAM—identification of violence tools—that sit there that practitioners in drug and alcohol services and homelessness services and other parts of the service system can use. They might capture some of the people who are not reported because they are likely engaging with someone who is already an information-sharing entity. If those services are trained well, they will be potentially able to understand what is happening, fill out that MARAM tool and send it through to whoever the government identifies as the right person to send it through to.

Anecdotally, we are not really sure what to do with that across the system. They are recording that information and it might sit on their database, but it is only accessible to those workers. We have got some narratives and beliefs that are happening for this person that identify that they are supportive of violence—of using violence—or we have seen some things that indicate that they might use violence, but that information is just kept within that agency alone. If we have got an identified central point for that information to be sent to, then that means that if there are any calls that that person may be misidentified in the future—if a victim-survivor accesses a specialist family violence service and says ‘Hey, I’ve got this police report’ or ‘I’ve got an upcoming intervention hearing where I’m listed as the respondent’—then there are other parts of the service system that have known information about that person’s use of violence and violence-supporting narratives that can back their position as a victim-survivor, without just relying on the victim-survivor. We have already got location-based central intake points, known as the Orange Door, so for me it would make sense that, with the appropriate protections in place, that serves as the place for those proactive information sharing requests to go to, to create a picture of people who have been identified by the community as using violence. I am also aware that there are complexities around freedom of information and what happens if someone requests their information that is recorded about them from the Orange Door. These considerations are things that we experience at Berry Street as well, where we get information about people using violence from victim-survivor services, from non-specialist services and from adult using violence services. It is not easy.

**Meng Heang TAK:** Yes. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Chris.

**Chris CREWITHER:** Perfect. Thank you for your evidence and your written submission as well. You note in your submission the Caring Dads program, which seems like a very worthwhile program. You also note on pages 11 to 12 of your submission that you collect data related to participation, profile and volume related to the Caring Dads program. Is that data shared with others, and is there data that you use or which would be beneficial to have access to to help run the Caring Dads program even better?

**Tracey GOLDER:** That Caring Dads program is now funded by DFFH, which is correct; we have been running that program through different funding. We report data to DFFH on that, and often report to child protection services. Often our referrals come through child protection for that program, so that information is then provided to child protection.

**Chris CREWITHER:** Thank you.

**Tracey GOLDER:** Did I answer that fully?

**Chris CREWITHER:** Yes. Is there any data that would be beneficial to have access to that you do not have access to now that could assist that program as well?

**Tracey GOLDER:** You have probably heard a lot around timely information—things like L17s, CIP reports. Once we have a man using violence in a 17-week program, if there is an L17, if there is some kind of event, we sometimes hear about that and sometimes we do not. So that would be useful—to clear pathways into police reports, incidents, changing risk and use of violence. Currently we only get that information from the affected family member in that family.

**Chris CREWITHER:** Thank you. Just a related question: Western Integrated Family Violence Committee is a subsequent witness who will be after you—well, we hope they will be. They note on page 4 of their submission that their view is that there needs to be an improvement in data collection processes in terms of collecting meaningful, robust and useful data on the Caring Dads program, and they say:

... what is currently available is not robust or useful.

Do you have any comments or thoughts on that submission of Western Integrated Family Violence Committee?

**Tracey GOLDER:** I think it speaks to our point earlier on outcomes rather than outputs. Berry Street conducted a study of the effectiveness of Caring Dads quite a few years ago, before my time at Berry Street, and the most robust finding from that was that it was a useful program to do in conjunction with other interventions—so that is the stuff we do not know. We know who gets referred, we know who completes and



who does not and we have anecdotal evidence sometimes from the families of those men, but there are no outcomes measures and no robust framework to measure outcomes.

**Tom BOWERMAN:** I can talk a little bit to that as well, because it was my time—I had started then. Caring Dads, as Tracey alluded to, initially was funded through philanthropy and Berry Street and is now funded through DFFH, so we are really pleased that has been extended and for the certainty that gives for our teams to be able to have a broader reach.

In that initial pilot we had a study. It was an actual research study or evaluation with Deakin University—that is shareable; we could provide that for you if we did not provide that as part of our links to that—and talked about, as Tracey said, some of the findings, limited probably in terms of their findings of outcomes because of the scale and size of the study and difficulty of accessing children and other people that may have been key people to talk about the outcomes as opposed to those outputs. But there were also some recommendations of enhancements for that that I know talked about Caring Dads in conjunction with other things that were going to work alongside or engage those people using violence and certainly in that kind of preprogram, pre doing that 17-week program, engaging them so that they are ready to access that program, because I think coming straight into a 17-week program probably means there is a bit of a drop-off and it is difficult to access—so if there was some sort of scaffolding that could make that more successful for the people that access the program.

**Chris CREWETHER:** Thank you. I think that would be helpful. Thank you, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** I agree. It would be very helpful to see that. Cindy.

**Cindy McLEISH:** Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to follow up on something that I think I heard earlier—that you were doing some programs within the residential care sector but you are not now. Is that because the budget was cut by \$141 million for child protection?

**Jac DWYER:** We at Berry Street had identified a gap with residential care’s knowledge of family violence and ability to respond, and we found funding to be able to put it in for a short term—I think it was underspend—to be able to provide a little upskill program. But we do not have the same level of flexibility of funding models as we used to have, because there is a big focus on service hours and support periods coming through our funding source as a specialist family violence victim-survivor funding source.

**Cindy McLEISH:** I just noticed that word ‘resources’ comes up quite a bit.

**Jac DWYER:** Yes.

**Tom BOWERMAN:** I could just comment on that as well, because it kind of fits across our broader services, the residential space. We were really pleased with the additional funding to transition all general residential care to therapeutic care last year or the year before in the state budget. We are going through a process of adding therapeutic specialists to all our homes, transitioning all our homes to the teaching family model, which is a therapeutic, trauma-informed, individualised model, to meet the needs of kids. We know that gives us opportunities to teach skills, different ways of relationships—different opportunities for young people who may have experienced family violence in their past that give them the opportunity of a very different outcome, and we are seeing that already through our programs.

**Cindy McLEISH:** So given that, was the sector overfunded previously by \$141 million?

**Tom BOWERMAN:** No, I would not have said it was, because I think they are two separate –

**Cindy McLEISH:** You are saying it is all fantastic, so maybe it was –

**Tom BOWERMAN:** They are two separate things, but there was a very specific piece of additional funding to provide therapeutic input into residential homes. It used to be that it was across some residential homes and that meant that it was across all residential homes—I think reflecting the increased complexity of kids coming into residential care across the sector.

**Cindy McLEISH:** I know an example of a kid, exactly as that, who missed out on the therapeutic care. It has been really quite tragic. It is a family that I knew.

One of the things that you mentioned before—and it was Tracey who was talking about it—is you capture some data, not nearly enough, through your programs. What stops you capturing that data anyway? And what data is not captured?

**Tracey GOLDER:** Resources.

**Cindy McLEISH:** Resources!

**Tracey GOLDER:** We are funded to provide intervention, and we are specialist family violence workers. I think that needs a specialist –

**Cindy McLEISH:** Is that through your case notes that you make these sorts of things in any case? I was a registered psychologist who worked in case management, and you would do this as a matter of course. You might not have a box to tick somewhere, but you would actually capture that data qualitatively.

**Tracey GOLDER:** Yes, we do, but then it does not go anywhere and it does not inform funded interventions.

**Cindy McLEISH:** So it would be a good suggestion to be able to use that.

**Tracey GOLDER:** Yes. Like Tom was saying earlier, I have worked for a long time in men's behaviour change programs, and men's behaviour change groups are funded for two assessments then 20 weeks of group. What we know from all that anecdotal evidence and from various studies is two assessment sessions and then 20 weeks of group does not suit everyone. So yes, we have got anecdotal evidence to suggest that that is not going to work because that man does not finish at the end of group; that is not reported to DFFH and we are not changing anything by knowing that.

**Cindy McLEISH:** Do you think they are interested in that data?

**Tracey GOLDER:** I hope so.

**Cindy McLEISH:** But they are not collecting it?

**Tracey GOLDER:** No.

**Cindy McLEISH:** But it is available if they funded you to be able to do that?

**Tracey GOLDER:** Yes.

**Cindy McLEISH:** What sorts of patterns do you notice through that? Are the participants in the behaviour change programs—are there specific things that you know that means a specific cohort will change behaviour or a specific cohort will not change behaviour?

**Tracey GOLDER:** Again, it is really difficult because we do not have robust outcome measures. We know that the cohorts that access service systems are not necessarily representative of all the people who are using family violence, so the service provision is the tip of the iceberg as to what we need to do. We know that the complexities, the overlapping intersectional—drug and alcohol, mental health—is not measured at all, but it is certainly something we see: men who have been in out-of-home care or some kind of service system as young people or adolescents experienced family violence in their childhood, particularly in Ballarat; childhood sexual assault experiences; institutional abuse. That stuff is not collected, but that is certainly what we see as a barrier to engaging particularly in a group-based process.

**Cindy McLEISH:** That is really interesting. With the kids who have been in out-of-home care, for example, is there any longitudinal data that captures them through 14 to 26, so if something has happened, they have been particularly violent at 26?

**Tracey GOLDER:** I think part of what we were talking about earlier is once you get to 18 you go to a different system, so we know –

**Cindy McLEISH:** The systems do not talk?

**Tracey GOLDER:** No.

**Tom BOWERMAN:** I think one of the things we would say as well is data for data's sake is not helpful. It has got to be analysed, useful and purposeful. We also know that our system, not just here in Victoria but across Australia and across the world, has never done a great job of focusing on outcomes and tracking those sorts of longitudinal studies. A huge amount of money goes into running services, but the same resourcing does not always go to the work that is needed that is significant to better assess what difference we are making, what impact we are making –

**Cindy McLEISH:** What works and what does not—and longitudinal.

**Tom BOWERMAN:** and what is the longitudinal impact for this 14-year-old when they are 28. Some of the models that we talk about in here have got that, but they have come from the US, often, because that is where there are universities and research and the resourcing to put behind some of those things, and it is not just a case of bringing those overseas models here, I do not think.

**Jac DWYER:** I think as well just adding to that is that our service system, if we think about child and family services, they have anecdotally always meant women and children, and men have not been in view, men as parents have not been in view or people who are using violence have not been in view. One of the things that we try and do through Safe & Together is to help us to understand where the source of harm is, to really in detail understand what that harm is and the impact, and what the non-offending parent is doing to promote the safety and wellbeing of children. I think that that provides a really rich understanding of what is going on, because we know that currently people who are responding to family violence—all you need to do is look in the comments of any article on family violence in the media, and the comments will be littered with holding the victim-survivor's response as the only way to avoid the violence. As a system we are starting to shift, but this is new, and it is so important that we do it, but inviting people who are using violence to change their behaviour is new—it is not something that we have done.

**Cindy McLEISH:** And violence has been around for, you know, decades, hundreds of years—why are we just doing it?

**Jac DWYER:** Well, because the people who are in control, the people who have created these systems are people who benefit by the use of violence. It is true. This is why we see higher rates and severity of family violence against Aboriginal women, against the queer community—this is the reason—against migrants and refugees.

**The CHAIR:** Can I pick up on a couple of points, as Cindy has raised, just to tease them out a bit further? We were talking about case note data and the fact that there is a lot of data in the case notes that is not being quoted or analysed. How would you do that?

**Tracey GOLDER:** Carefully—and again, we would only be collecting data from service users, not from the wider community who are using violence. I think there would need to be a really clear framework. There is not a clear framework in how to write case notes. In order for it to be consistent and meaningful there would need to be a really clear, robust framework around what we were capturing and what we were using it for.

**The CHAIR:** We heard yesterday from Good Shepherd, and one of the things they spoke about was potentially using AI to be collecting—to be using AI to go through case notes to pull out findings and insights. Is that something Berry Street has considered at all?

**Tracey GOLDER:** I have not.

**Darrylin GALANOS:** I know only the beginning of investigations and thinking about AI has begun. I have not thought about it in that context, but I certainly will be taking that back to the brains trust.

**Tom BOWERMAN:** I think, like most organisations, there is an appetite for AI and also a caution around what is the benefit and where does that information go and how, as Tracey said, it needs to be done very carefully. Is it going to be nuanced enough to make that useful or it is just going to be more information?

**The CHAIR:** I think everyone is grappling with AI and how to use it at the moment. I know I have banned it from my office, but everyone is grappling with how to use it. We were also talking about the systems not

talking to each other from when a young person using violence turns 18 and moving out of, say, the residential care system into, I guess, the adult system. Do you think it is worthwhile to bring these systems together? And if so, how would you go about it?

**Darrylin GALANOS:** That is a very nuanced thought, thinking about the protections that we need to provide young people in their developmental context and what we might take to inform that that might later label—but it is also very useful, we were talking about this before, to understand notes from children about children when they were young and that would inform adult interventions. I do not know, Tracey: what do you think about—because I think about adult services trying to engage with young people a little bit earlier before they turn 18 and how we would capture that data safely.

**Tracey GOLDER:** I think there are a huge amount of risks in that, and I think it also kind of depends on where we are headed with the future of working with people who use violence. If we are looking at pathways out of violence using a suite of services that do not punish or give punitive responses, if we invest in ways of engaging with people using violence in order to lead them down a path where they stop using violence, then collecting that data from young people could be useful. If we are collecting data from children and then labelling them as perpetrators and they go from being victims to perpetrators, then that is not useful. It is really complex and it is really nuanced. It depends on how we then treat people who use violence. It depends on how we invest in changing that behaviour.

**Darrylin GALANOS:** And we know from ANROWS reports about adolescents using violence in the home that 89% of those that had reported using violence had reported experiencing family violence or child abuse themselves, so we can see that there is a real –

**Tom BOWERMAN:** Correlation.

**Darrylin GALANOS:** Yes.

**Tracey GOLDER:** I certainly have not seen a man in Caring Dads who did not come from a place of family violence in their own childhood. We do not collect that data, but I have never seen a man in Caring Dads who was not a victim of family violence as a child.

**Annabelle CLEELAND:** Is there anything you wanted to get on the record that you have not spoken about or mentioned, I should say?

**Tom BOWERMAN:** It was not something we have not mentioned. But just to that point, it just emphasises to me that getting the quality data can really help inform having services that better meet the needs across the whole service system.

**Darrylin GALANOS:** One hundred per cent.

**Tom BOWERMAN:** So that is really crucial. Obviously getting that, as we have described, is challenging not just now but even thinking about how to set up a system that captures that. That has got to be the way we go forward to be able to inform what we do and how we do that and how we focus on outcomes as opposed to those widgets or outputs.

**Annabelle CLEELAND:** Just that, but in a recommendation.

**Jac DWYER:** I think it is useful to think about the purpose of collecting the data and what it is going to be used for at the time of collection, because we know that data that is collected about people who use violence can be used to mitigate risk to adult and child victim-survivors, so wrap around them to think about how we can support them to be away from the risk. It can be used in some ways to think about strategic and practice development, which is, I guess, a thing that is a bit missing at the moment. We would love to have more of that to be able to uplift that part of the work, to invite people using violence to change behaviours. And then there is also having the information. Having really good information can help the service system to really understand what is going on in these families. I think at the moment there are a lot of assumptions that are made because the assessment is not quite as good as it could be. So holding the purpose in mind when you are collecting the data, and then using the data for the intended purpose I think is the bit.

**Annabelle CLEELAND:** Without being a burden on the service.

**Jac DWYER:** If you are holding the purpose in mind, then depending on who you are engaging with, you are getting the right pieces of data and you are not trying to do everything for every worker and therefore getting a whole bunch of unnecessary data.

**Tom BOWERMAN:** And I think if it has a purpose, then it is less of a burden anyway. I am much more likely to want to collect that if I can see the benefit down the line.

**The CHAIR:** Thank you to our witnesses from Berry Street for appearing before the Committee today. We are really appreciative of the time and effort that you have taken to appear before us today and also for the work that you have put into your written submission, so thank you very much.

We will now take a short break before our next witnesses.

**Witnesses withdrew.**