



Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

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BAC-CO-53031

Kate Sanderson
Coroners Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
By email: cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

Dear Ms Bryant

On 13 November 2024, Coroner Judge Cain, made five recommendations following the inquest into the passing of Noeline Dalzell that were directed to the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) including: three recommendations directed to the Victorian Government, one recommendation with relevance to a joint response with Victoria Police and one with the Department of Justice and Community Safety.

On the 12 February 2025, the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet authorised me to respond on behalf of the Victorian Government to recommendations one, two and four. As such I am writing to advise that the department has considered the recommendations and a response to the five recommendations is enclosed with this letter.

The department is committed to ensuring critical elements of the family violence response system, including The Orange Door and the Central Information Point, are continuously improving to ensure that victim/survivors are supported and people using violence are visible and accountable.

Should you have any queries, please contact Melanie Heenan, Deputy Secretary, Family Safety Victoria at [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

Peta McCammon
Secretary

10 / 03 / 2025

Encl DFFH response to COR 2020 000670

The Coroner's Court of Victoria's guidelines suggest including one of the following in response to each recommendation:

- (a) The Coroner's recommendation has OR will be implemented**
- (b) An alternative to the Coroner's Recommendation has OR will be implemented**
- (c) The Coroner's recommendation is under consideration**
- (d) There are unresolved issues with the Coroner's recommendation that needs to be addressed**
- (e) The Coroner's recommendation cannot be implemented**

Recommendation 1:

That the Victorian Government investigate supplementing and enhancing the CIP to enable the multi-directional flow of information relevant to perpetrator risk among all relevant Departments and agencies in a way that is timely, proactive, complete and automated (where possible and appropriate to manage risk).

Response: An alternative to the Coroner's Recommendation has been implemented

The Victorian Government accepts that the timely, multidirectional sharing of information relevant to perpetrator risk is essential to victim survivor safety and perpetrator accountability. The Victorian Government is committed to the efficient and proactive sharing of perpetrator risk information between departments and service agencies to manage and assess risk for victim survivors, including, children.

Purpose of Central Information Point (CIP)

Family Safety Victoria (FSV) established the CIP in partnership with Victoria Police, the Magistrates' Court of Victoria, Corrections Victoria and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (DFFH) Child Protection (partner agencies). Staff from FSV and these agencies work side by side to provide information to frontline family violence practitioners in The Orange Door, about a perpetrator or alleged perpetrator of family violence into a consolidated report (CIP report) for family violence risk assessment and management.

The CIP report, or relevant parts thereof, can be shared with other services and agencies under the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme (FVISS), both on a voluntary/proactive basis and as a result of a request for information. The FVISS is intended to complement the Child Information Sharing Scheme (CISS), whereby information about a child's safety and wellbeing can be shared both on a voluntary and proactive basis.

The CIP provides frontline family violence practitioners with access to timely, consolidated family violence risk relevant information about perpetrators, to increase the safety of victim survivors, including children and families and facilitates greater perpetrator accountability. The CIP shifts the focus from victim survivors to a perpetrator's history and pattern of behaviour, providing services with a better

understanding of the risk a perpetrator poses and promoting accountability for perpetrators. Previous to these reforms and legal authorisations, this information was not accessible to frontline family violence workers or across prescribed services more broadly.

The CIP is a key part of broader service system reforms including the FVISS and the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM Framework), and the CISS

Purpose and background of MARAM, FVISS and CISS

A consistent, high-quality, statewide approach to identifying, assessing and managing the risk of family violence is vital to the safety of victim survivors and the accountability of perpetrators. This is the purpose of Victoria's Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework, known as the MARAM Framework, which was established through the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) and commenced in 2018.

Over 6,500 organisations, employing over 400,000 workers across the education, health, justice, police, and human services sectors, are prescribed under the MARAM Framework. These organisations are required to align their policies, procedures and practice guidance with MARAM. They are also supported by information sharing schemes that authorise their workforces to share information that will help them assess and manage the risk of family violence.

These interrelated reforms, together with the CIP, have enabled a cultural shift in information sharing practice, system collaboration and the assessment and management of family violence risk.

MARAM guides the practice and responsibilities of professionals to collaborate and provide coordinated timely responses, and determine what information is risk relevant share between services for risk assessment or management purposes. Practice guidance is provided for working with both victim survivors and adults using family violence. Training is provided to prescribed workforces to apply practice and share risk relevant information.

The FVISS provides the legal authorisation to share risk relevant information and enables prescribed services to share information in a timely and proactive way to support a client's risk needs. The FVISS is the key enabler to MARAM, which provides professionals with guidance on *how* to undertake coordination of risk assessment and management, supported by information sharing, to improve accountability for perpetrators and safety for victim survivors.

The 5-year legislative review of FVISS, CIP and the MARAM Framework completed in 2023 ([FVRIM review](#)), found that the FVISS has facilitated increased two-way flow of information between agencies.

Putting CIP in context to FVISS

The purpose and functional capability of the CIP report is to provide CIP requesters (such as frontline family violence practitioners), with risk relevant information about a perpetrator held by CIP partner agencies at a single point in time, rather than to support the broader service system with family violence risk relevant information – it is the role and purpose of the FVISS to do this. Currently, CIP requesters (those authorised to request a CIP report), are frontline family violence practitioners who work directly in assessing and managing family violence risk. This includes perpetrator services and victim survivor agencies co-located in The Orange Door, including working with children and families' services.

The FVISS is a more agile mechanism than the CIP to support the timely and *proactive multi-directional* flow of information. The range of services prescribed under MARAM and FVISS is significantly broader than the services with data available through the CIP/or services which request CIP reports – however, as noted above, CIP reports can be shared via FVISS where appropriate.

The FVISS demonstrates the authorising environment for the service system to enable the multi-directional, proactive and responsive, flow of family violence risk relevant information (including by information held by agencies who contribute information to CIP reports), as intended by Recommendation 1.

Automation is outside of the design and capacity of both the CIP (centralised process and platform to collate perpetrator information) and FVISS (legal authorisation to share information between professionals working in prescribed entities). To enable automation capability would require multi-IT platform redesign or redevelopment which is not within any departments IT forward plan or resourcing capacity.

Recommendation 2:

The Victorian Government immediately formalise the sharing of CIP reports by approving Child Protection practitioners as requestors.

Response: Under consideration

The Victorian Government supports the intent of the recommendation to support the timely sharing of relevant risk information to aid decision-making and safety planning. The Victorian Government notes that implementing this recommendation will be subject to future funding and implementation considerations.

The Victorian Government notes that Child Protection practitioners are currently able to access, as relevant, family violence risk information contained in a CIP report by seeking that information directly from Victoria Police, Court Services Victoria and Corrections Victoria via the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme or existing legal permissions under section 192 of the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing is working to assess the impact of expanding the scheme in line with Recommendation 2. This includes consideration of

demand, resourcing and financial implications and is expected to be considered by the Victorian Government in future budget cycles.

Recommendation 4:

If Recommendation 3 is accepted, the Victorian Government investigate enhancement to the CIP to include a capability that the release of a FV offender (from prison, police cells or directly from a court) triggers an automated notification of that information to all other agencies.

Response: The Coroner's recommendation cannot be implemented

The department refers to the response from Victoria Police and notes for the reasons set out in that response, Recommendation 4 cannot be implemented.

Recommendation 5:

Victoria Police and The Orange Door in two regions as a pilot collaborate to embed advanced family violence practitioners within each FVIU to assess, jointly respond to and manage repeat and/or high-risk family violence matters and improve proactive victim/AFM engagement. I note the complexity of placing a Family Violence 80 Practitioner within the structure of a statutory organisation such as Victoria Police and acknowledge that this will need to be a senior worker with extensive experience and provided with supervision by a specialist family violence service. An independent evaluation of the pilot program should be completed within two years of commencing operation in each of the two regions selected.

Response: Under consideration

The department has consulted with Victoria Police in response to this recommendation and will work together to consider if this recommendation can be implemented or any alternative options. The department notes that implementation of this recommendation or any alternate option would be subject to future Victorian Government funding decisions.

Recommendation 7:

DJCS and DFFH take immediate steps to complete work on recommendation 2 of the Multi-Agency Review and identify who is to take the leadership role, including identifying and implementing a central contact person or agency with responsibility for coordinated oversight of family violence perpetrators, affected family members, and associated service providers. Given the rate of family violence perpetrated on First Nations women and children, this approach needs to include First Nations community organisations and incorporate expertise from those with lived experience.

Response: An alternative to the Coroner's Recommendation has been implemented

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing are implementing an alternative to the Coroner's recommendation.

Consistent with the recommendations of the 2015 Royal Commission into Family Violence, the Government has implemented a system in which relevant agencies work together under the common MARAM framework and take the lead as and when the interests of a particular family require it. This is the approach behind the referral pathways that are offered through The Orange Door and the approach which the Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme, the Central Information Point and MARAM make possible.

The Government has taken steps to complete work on recommendation 2 of the Multi-Agency Review with respect to addressing matters where there is a serious family violence risk, but which do not meet the Risk Assessment and Management Panel (RAMP) eligibility.

Implementation Work Underway

In respect of recommendation 2 of the Multi-Agency Review, key actions have been identified, one of which aims to address matters where there is a serious family violence risk, but which do not meet the Risk Assessment and Management Panel (RAMP) eligibility. To that end, the Changing Ways two-year pilot project (**Changing Ways**), is being implemented and managed by the department with governance by the Family Violence Reform Board. Changing Ways has been established in the following four Areas; Barwon, North-East Melbourne, Southern Melbourne and Bayside Peninsula. It provides intensive, coordinated responses to serious risk adults using family violence and the victim survivor(s) impacted by their violence, addressing a gap in the current service system.

Changing Ways is designed to increase the safety of victim survivors and enables service providers to work more intensively, extensively and flexibly to reduce the risk of further harm and increase the safety of former or current partners, children, and other family members. It delivers an integrated service response by working directly with victim survivors to increase their safety and where safe to do so, by directly or indirectly engaging with the adult using family violence who poses a serious risk. Changing Ways has a strong focus on multiagency collaboration to keep serious-risk adults using family violence in view of services so their use of violence can be collaboratively addressed, to prevent further harm.

Changing Ways operates in four areas, with one pilot tailored for Aboriginal Victorians, operated by an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation. Providers work with a range of services and organisations within their local area including Victoria Police, Community Correctional Services, Child Protection services, mental health services, family services, alcohol and other drug services, and disability services.

Implementation of the Changing Ways pilot commenced in the Barwon area in October 2023 with the other areas having commenced in April 2024.