MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA

31 May 2024

Parliament of Victoria
Legislative Assembly Legal and Social
Parliament House
Spring Street
East Melbourne VIC 3002

<u>Delivered via online submission</u>

Dear Legal and Social Issues Committee

The Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) is pleased to provide insight into the inquiry concerning the capture of data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria. As the peak representative body for 79 councils in the state, we offer our perspective on the importance of this data collection and its benefits, particularly within the framework of local government services.

It is crucial to acknowledge the extensive experience and commitment of Victorian councils to preventing family violence and protecting women. Over the years, councils have played a pivotal role in strategic planning for the well-being of families and children and have been major providers of essential services such as kindergartens and maternal and child health services. By offering these services, councils have established themselves as crucial contact points for identifying and supporting families who are at risk of or experiencing family violence.

Currently, national reporting primarily focuses on the experiences and outcomes of victims of family violence. However, there exists a gap in data regarding perpetrators and the underlying factors that drive their behaviour. While research indicates various risk factors for perpetration, comprehensive data on the extent of violence perpetration in Australia remains limited. This underscores the importance of capturing data on perpetrators to better understand the dynamics of family violence and its intersection with diverse communities.

Local Government Areas (LGA) currently seek data on perpetrators of family violence from the Crime Statistics Agency and Victorian Women's Health Atlas. These databases gather data from the Victoria Police record data and the Victorian Family Violence database. Both these websites provide data by LGA.

It would be beneficial to explore avenues for collecting data from local government authorities (LGAs). In our current service system, LGAs are at the forefront with the community working indirectly with perpetrators of family violence in many varied capacities such as sports groups, local work organisations and in services that LGAs provide. LGAs are focused on prevention and Maternal and Child Health (MCH) services play a role in screening and supporting the safety, health, and well-being of victim-survivors. Data collected by MCH services within the health record regarding FV consults, risk factors, MARAM, and safety plans. There is a need to enhance data collection mechanisms to include perpetrator-specific data from Victorias LGA's.

Integrating the LGA-based data with other sources such as police records, court data, and specialist perpetrator services can provide a comprehensive understanding of family violence perpetration. By aggregating and analysing this data to be more meaningful such as identifying age, gender identity, ethnicity, birthplace, relationship to victim, past criminal behaviour, and past family violence behaviours local government services can gain insights into the prevalence of family violence within their communities, identify trends, and tailor interventions accordingly.

An integrated data system for the Early Years services would be beneficial to reducing the siloing of services and promoting information sharing and risk assessments.

In conclusion, the MAV fully supports the inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria. This data is crucial for enhancing the capacity of local government services to prevent and address family violence effectively. By strengthening our understanding of perpetrators and their behaviours, we can better equip ourselves to work effectively in the preventative space, intervene early, support victims, and ultimately create safer communities for all.

Yours sincerely

KELLY GRISBY
Chief Executive Officer