

**Response to the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor's call for submissions:  
Review of family violence information sharing and risk management – June to September 2022**

**Submission #4 – Organisation – Berry Street Victoria**

**The Family Violence Information Sharing Scheme and Central Information Point**

*Please reflect on your experience in collecting, requesting, using or disclosing confidential information in the past 3 years when responding to the following questions.*

**1. Are the legal requirements in the Act sufficiently clear?**

*In responding to this question, please consider whether you feel the Act is sufficiently clear in relation to the meanings of key terms (such as person of concern, primary person, confidential information and excluded information), the circumstances in which confidential information can be requested or disclosed, record-keeping requirements and any other matter*

Yes

**2. The Act outlines principles, and requires the Minister to issue guidelines, to guide decision-making in relation to the collection, use or disclosure of confidential information.**

**a) To what extent are the principles reflected in your organisation's policies, procedures, practice guidance and tools?**

Mostly

**How could this be improved?**

Specialist Family Violence programs and organisational level policy and systems are fully aligned, however alignment and training is still progressing for non-specialist Family Violence programs.

**b) Do the principles and guidelines support you to make decisions under the Act?**

Yes

**3. Does the Act provide sufficient scope and authority for you to collect, request, use or disclose all information you feel is needed to effectively establish, assess and manage risks of family violence?**

Yes

**4. Have you been able to obtain consolidated and up-to-date information from the Central Information Point (CIP) about perpetrators of family violence to support your organisation to assess and manage risks of family violence?**

Yes

**5. Have you observed an increase in the level of information sharing, including:**

**a) information being disclosed voluntarily?**

Yes

**Please make any additional comments.**

The flow of information has improved between services (particularly with perpetrator services), however some ISE's / Government authorities will only share when asked and rarely voluntarily disclose.

**b) information being disclosed on request?**

Yes

**Please make any additional comments**

Increasingly being asked for copies of Risk Assessments and Safety Plans, whereas previously we responded to questions focused on service level engagement.

**6. Have you observed an increase in the level of collaboration between organisations to support the delivery of coordinated services?**

Yes

**Please make any additional comments.**

Particularly within specialist Family Violence services, however collaboration with other sectors and universal services is still developing.

**7. Have you experienced any legal barriers or challenges in:**

**a) collecting, requesting, using or disclosing information?**

Yes

**If yes, what were the legal barriers or challenges?**

The Spent Convictions Scheme has been cited to prevent the Magistrates Court and VicPol from sharing perpetrator information.

**b) collaborating with other organisations to deliver coordinated services?**

No

**c) complying with the Act's requirements?**

No

**8. Are you aware of any instances of the unauthorised use or disclosure of confidential information under the FVISS or CIP provisions?**

Yes

**Please make any additional comments.**

The intersection of the Information Sharing Schemes, CY&F Act and Privacy legislation is less clear with non-specialist Family Violence Services.

#### **Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework**

*Please reflect on your experience in aligning your organisation's policies, procedures, practice guidance and tools with the MARAM Framework when responding to the following questions.*

**9. Are the legal requirements under the Act sufficiently clear, including in relation to the meaning of framework organisation and section 191 agency?**

Yes

**10. Have you observed greater consistency in organisations' approaches to family violence risk identification, assessment and management?**

Unsure

**Please make any additional comments.**

Risk awareness has increased across sectors and workforces, however active risk management remains inconsistent

#### **General**

**11. Have you observed any adverse effects of the provisions for particular groups, such as children and young people, adolescents who use violence in the home, or members of the Aboriginal community?**

No

**12. Do the provisions sufficiently provide for the needs and characteristics of diverse communities?**

Unsure

**13. Do you have any other comments about the operation of the provisions, including any suggestions for improvement?**

Continued training and structured reflections, especially for non-specialist Family Violence services. Increased investment in how to respond to priority cohorts identified via the Royal Commission. Training/support to assist providers to operationalise information, especially CIPs. Information Sharing help-line has a tendency to simply refer callers to the guidelines instead of providing an interpretation or opinion. This limits the discussion. More engaging MARAM e-Learning modules. Non-specialist Family Violence DFFH programs to provide implementation support and advice relevant to their funded activity. e.g. Care Services/OoHC.