



Secretary

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

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BAC-CO-56145

Ms Kate Sanderson
Coroners Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria

By email: cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

Dear Ms Sanderson

I write in response to the findings made by State Coroner Judge Cain on 12 June 2025 into the tragic and violent death of Ms Monique Lezsak caused by her partner, Sven Lindemann.

I was deeply troubled to learn about the circumstances leading to Ms Lezsak's death and extend my deepest condolences to her family and loved ones.

The Coroner's recommendation

1. That the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing and Family Safety Victoria work with and resource bodies such as Respect Victoria and Safe and Equal to deliver a public campaign to resource the broader community, beyond service providers, to better understand the risks that perpetrators of family violence pose, including in the absence of physical violence. This campaign should consider how to reach the broadest possible audience including through education, health, local community, sports and faith groups. The campaign should enhance awareness of fatality risks posed by those who use coercive and controlling behaviour, factors that may increase risk (such as in the context of separation) - and should include clear information to victims, friends, family and bystanders as to services available to help keep them safe.

2. That the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence provide funding for a service designed to provide support to children and young people (and their carers) bereaved by homicide.

As the second recommendation falls within my departmental responsibilities, the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence has referred that recommendation to me for my consideration and response, alongside my consideration and response to the first recommendation, which you have directed to the department.

Response to recommendation 1

The Coroner's recommendation is being implemented.

The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing (the department) supports the intent of this recommendation and has consulted with Respect Victoria and Safe and Equal in considering it.

Educating the wider community about coercive control is a priority under the 'whole of community' focus area identified in Victoria's *Until every Victorian is safe: Third Rolling Action Plan to end family and sexual violence 2025-27 (Third RAP)*. The Victim Survivor's Advisory Council (VSAC) has strongly advocated for greater community awareness about coercive control. The department has committed to partnering with VSAC to increase community awareness and understanding about what coercive control is and what to do once it is identified. This is an action in the *Third RAP*.

Respect Victoria has produced a content series on its website and social media channels in various forms targeting coercive control and non-physical violence. These resources are available at: <https://www.respectvictoria.vic.gov.au/coercive-control-non-physical-violence-and-relationship-red-flags>. This content was developed in response to increased community interest following the introduction of coercive control offences in other jurisdictions. Engagement with the series has been consistently high, particularly for 'love bombing' and 'gaslighting', with these pages among the most visited on the Respect Victoria website. Users frequently provide positive feedback through the site's "Was this page useful?" functions. Pages include links to further information and crisis support services.

Respect Victoria is continuing to build on this work by developing future communications that deepen community understanding of coercive control – what it looks like, what drives it and the steps that can be taken to prevent and respond to it. Respect Victoria is also supporting implementation of the Ballarat Community Saturation Model - an initiative designed with the Ballarat community to prevent gender-based violence. Saturation models include programs and initiatives in schools, sports settings, workplaces, community groups, for new parents, or for young people, and collectively mobilise communities to take action.

The What Kind of Man do you want to be campaign produced by Respect Victoria directly addresses the gendered drivers of violence. The campaign includes resources for sporting clubs, parents, working with men and boys, in community and for discussions 'with your mates'. The Victorian Government has also committed to leverage major events to amplify community conversations about family and gender-based violence as an action in the Third RAP.

Safe and Equal also addresses coercive and controlling behaviour through its *Are you Safe at Home* campaign: <https://areyousafeathome.org.au/>. This national initiative raises awareness of family and gender-based violence, empowering communities to start life-changing conversations with those who may be experiencing abuse – including coercive

control. The site has information and resources available in 15 languages and includes tailored support for LGBTIQ+ people.

To complement the year-round *Are You Safe at Home?* initiative, Safe and Equal has created *Are You Safe at Home? Day*, a proactive marketing and communications initiative on 10 May each year. Now in its fifth year, promotion has included a communications toolkit for stakeholders, coordinated social media and traditional media campaigns, a supporter webinar and a street poster rollout across Melbourne's CBD and Ballarat. In 2025, the communications toolkit was accessed over 1,000 times and social media impressions rose by more than 200 percent during the week of *Are You Safe at Home? Day*. Overall, campaign content developed by Safe and Equal was shared by more than 200 organisations and individuals, including high-profile influencers, sector experts, Victorian Ministers and Victoria Police.

More broadly, coercion and controlling behaviour is addressed within Victoria's Family Violence Protection Act (2008), which frames family violence as 'patterns of abuse over a period of time.' This includes behaviours that coerce, control and dominate family members and that cause a family member to fear for their safety or wellbeing. The Act enables a Family Violence Intervention Order or Safety Notice to be issued to prevent further coercive or controlling behaviour, a breach of which is a criminal offence.

This understanding of coercion and controlling behaviour is also embedded in Victoria's approach to family violence risk assessment and management through the Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM Framework). The MARAM Framework supports professionals across the continuum of specialist family violence services, targeted and universal services, including health, education, child protection, police and justice workforces to consistently identify, assess and manage family violence risk.

MARAM contains a set of evidence-based risk factors associated with greater likelihood and/or severity of family violence. While re-partnering and separation is not included as a stand-alone risk factor, it is covered by existing risk factors and flagged repeatedly in the supporting practice guidance. This includes sections regarding:

- obsessive/ jealous behaviour toward a victim survivor including highly obsessive, fixated and ruminative thinking about the victim survivor/s' new partner or suspected new partner as an indicator of escalating or serious risk;
- stalking including during and following separation and when the victim survivor has commenced a new relationship;
- perpetrator-focused guidance that directs professionals to observe behaviour and responses that indicate the perpetrator is 'bitter about the adult victim survivor's new partner and their relationship with children';
- 'narratives of hostility or revenge directed at the victim survivor/s' new partner, suspected or presumed new partner' and 'direct threats made towards the adult

victim survivor/s' new partner or presumed new partner' as an indicator of escalating or serious risk.

In addition, the Victorian Government worked collaboratively with the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions to develop the National Principles on Coercive Control, released in September 2023. The National Principles unify all jurisdictions in a commitment to address coercive control in a manner that is best suited to their unique legislative, policy and practice contexts.

The department continues to address coercive control across the family violence system, including through prevention programs that engage a range of groups in the community, as well as behaviour change programs for people using violence.

Response to recommendation 2

The recommendation is under consideration by the department.

The Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, together with the department support the intent of this recommendation.

The department has provided funding for a project to improve support for children, young people and their families affected by family violence homicide. The department has commissioned the University of Melbourne to undertake this project, which is being co-designed with, and informed by, people with lived experience.

The project will map current services in Victoria that support children, young people and families bereaved by family homicide. It will also co-design best practice advice with people with lived experience that incorporates a child-centred approach and is aligned with the work of Child Protection and The Orange Door. This project is included as an action in the *Third Rolling Action Plan 2025-27*.

The project is a precursor to any potential implementation of the recommendation, noting that the University of Melbourne has publicly called for a “tailored mental health response for bereaved children.”

More broadly, the department funds a range of support services for children and young people experiencing family violence, including those who have lost a parent to family violence homicide, at the point of crisis and to support their recovery and healing.

Specialist family violence case management is the primary service response for victim survivors of family violence, including children and young people. Case management is used to assess and manage family violence risk, plan for safety and to establish stability victim survivors' lives, including through assessing and responding to the specific needs of children

and young people. A key principle underpinning case management is that children and young people are recognised as victim survivors in their own right, and their safety and wellbeing are prioritised at every stage of service provision.

Through case management services, victim survivors can access Flexible Support Packages – flexible funding supporting personalised, holistic responses to assist in longer-term recovery. Individualised packages provide flexible brokerage to victim survivors, including children and young people, to purchase a range of tailored and practical supports. In some cases, this includes purchasing specialist trauma counselling for children and young people, offering another pathway for bereaved children and young people to access support.

In recognition of the importance of supports for recovery and healing, specialist providers are funded to deliver therapeutic services for victim survivors. Activities include play, art, or music therapies for children, young people and adults. A minimum of 40 per cent of family violence therapeutic services across the State are directed towards supporting children and young people, enabling tailored support for approximately 3,000 children each year.

Specialist family violence services, including case management, therapeutic responses and flexible support packages are delivered by 103 providers across Victoria, and are available to all victim survivors.

Should you require further information, please contact Melanie Heenan, Deputy Secretary Family Safety Victoria [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Peta McCammon
Secretary

10/09/2025