



Secretary

Department of Families, Fairness and Housing

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

Dear Ms Sanderson

I refer to your correspondence of 25 August 2025, attaching the Form 38 issued to Family Safety Victoria (FSV), requiring a written response to the recommendations made by former State Coroner, Judge Cain, in the Finding into Death Without Inquest (Finding) relating to [REDACTED] (ref COR 2020 004890).

First, I extend my sincere condolences to the family and loved ones of [REDACTED].

Coroner's recommendation

Judge Cain made the following recommendation in the Finding:

That Family Safety Victoria consider how best to integrate the evidence of branding and sexual coercion/exploitation demonstrated by this case and other research into the MARAM, its tools and training.

Response to recommendation:

The recommendation is under consideration.

The Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM Framework) was a key recommendation of the 2016 Royal Commission into Family Violence. MARAM is legislated under Part 11 of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic) (the Act). Section 194 of the Act requires periodic reviews of MARAM to ensure it reflects the current evidence base for family violence risk assessment and management.

The MARAM Framework contains a set of evidence-based risk factors associated with a greater likelihood and/or severity of family violence, including the risk of lethality. Sexual coercion/exploitation and branding are not specifically referenced as unique risk factors for adults. However, these perpetrator risk behaviours are covered by existing risk factors and the MARAM Framework's supporting practice guidance:

- **Sexual assault of victim** – the MARAM practice guides define sexual assault broadly as including any acts of a sexual nature carried out against the victim

survivor's will through force, intimidation or coercion. The adult and child victim-survivor-focused MARAM practice guidance indicates high-risk perpetrators use 'sexual violence through coercion and manipulation'. The MARAM adult victim survivor intermediate risk assessment tool identifies sexual assault of a victim survivor as an indicator of escalating or serious risk as it forms part of a controlling pattern designed to dominate, humiliate and denigrate a victim survivor. Risk assessment of this risk factor supports identification of sexual coercion/exploitation as a presentation of sexual assault.

- **Controlling behaviours** – adult and child victim-survivor-focused MARAM practice guidance recognises that controlling behaviours can include the perpetrator telling the victim survivor how to dress, and monitoring and regulation of everyday activities. Professionals are prompted to consider how perpetrators exert coercive control using a range of behaviours that indicate escalating or serious risk. Risk assessment of this risk factor supports identification of branding as a presentation of controlling behaviours.

The first independent review of MARAM (Evidence Review), completed in 2023, did not identify branding as an emerging perpetrator risk behaviour, and as such no recommendation was made for a standalone risk factor to be added to MARAM. Branding often involves coercive practices such as tattooing, scarring, burning or other form of body modification, often including the perpetrator's name and designed to signify ownership of the victim survivor/s. However, the department notes the Coroner's reference to emerging research on this presentation, which the Department commits to interrogate further to inform future updates to the Framework. Through implementation of the Evidence Review, consideration is also being given to the escalation of risk, including the risk of lethality linked to coercive control.

Furthermore, the Evidence Review identified the need for additional guidance to be provided in relation to sexual violence and an emphasis placed on additional screening for intimate partner sexual violence. This includes strengthening questions to identify the risk of sexual assault for people with disability. In implementing this finding and associated recommendations, the department will consider the recommendation proposed by Judge Cain.

The Victorian Government has accepted all recommendations from the Evidence Review and is committed to ensuring MARAM continues to support family violence system reform. FSV has developed an implementation plan for delivery over the coming years.

A Data Review forms a second and complementary part of the Evidence Review. This Data Review is underway to analyse data on the current MARAM evidence-based risk factors and assess their correlation to the presence and level of family violence risk, including the likelihood of lethal outcomes. The Data Review is considering the MARAM risk assessment dataset oversights by the department, the Coroners Court's family violence dataset, and other emerging reports related to family violence deaths. This Data Review will provide the department with further information about emerging risk factors for homicide that are currently not captured within MARAM, including potentially those recommended by the Coroners Court. The review is due for completion by the end of 2025.

FSV is committed to ensuring that all individuals and organisations that have a role in family violence risk identification, assessment and management are supported with a consistent, evidence-informed framework.

If you require further information or would like to discuss the material provided, please contact Melanie Heenan, Deputy Secretary, Family Safety Victoria at
[REDACTED]

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. McCammon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Peta McCammon

Secretary

13/11/2025