



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 7 January 2026 attaching a Form 38 issued to Family Safety Victoria (FSV) requiring a written response to the recommendations made in Coroner Judge Sanger's Finding into Death Without Inquest (Finding) of Ms Michelle Margaret Darragh (ref COR 2021 005393).

I would like to extend my deepest condolences to Ms Darragh's family and loved ones.

The Coroner's recommendation

In relation to FSV, State Coroner Judge Sanger made the following recommendation:

- 1. That Family Safety Victoria review the removal of pregnancy as a specific risk factor in the MARAM and consider if the evidence base supports its reinstatement.*

Response to recommendation

The Coroner's recommendation is under consideration.

The Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) contains a set of evidence-based risk factors associated with greater likelihood and/or severity of family violence, including the risk of lethality.

'Physical assault while pregnant/following new birth' is a serious risk factor in MARAM, indicating an increased risk of lethality. The Foundation Knowledge Guide and the [Intermediate Risk Assessment and Practice Guidance for Adult and Child Victim Survivors](#) provide guidance on how to assess risk relating to pregnancy, including by considering non-physical forms of family violence.

The Practice Guidance includes information about how:

- family violence often commences or intensifies during pregnancy and is associated with increased rates of miscarriage, low birth weight, premature birth, foetal injury and foetal death
- family violence during pregnancy is regarded as a significant indicator of future harm to the woman and child victim, and that this factor is associated with control and escalation of violence already occurring
- sexual assault and emotional abuse can increase during pregnancy
- practitioners need to ask about non-physical abuse such as withholding food or other needs related to pregnancy
- the risk of a victim survivor being killed or almost killed increases with the presence of other risk factors.

Section 194 of the Family Violence Protection Act 2008 (Vic) (the Act) requires a review of the operation of MARAM every five years to ensure it reflects the current evidence base for family violence risk assessment and management. The 2023 independent review of MARAM ([Victorian Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework 5-year Evidence Review](#)) did not make recommendations on changing the language of this risk factor, but it did note that:

- the nuances in presentation of physical violence towards women while pregnant (for example, violence directed towards specific body parts) may be an element to consider incorporating into MARAM
- there is scope for updating MARAM to reflect evidence that women with disability, women aged 18-24 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and women with severe mental illness are at higher risk of experiencing family violence during pregnancy
- stakeholders suggested MARAM could more adequately address potential abuse in the postpartum period
- MARAM content could be expanded to better capture escalation of risk in relation to pregnancy, such as the number of pregnancies, the role of pregnancies and how pregnancy is used to control victim survivors
- reproductive coercion could be more strongly reflected in the tools.

The Evidence Review recommended considering and including the above as part of recommendation 13: update the evidence-based guidance around risk factors and presentations of risk. The Victorian Government has accepted all recommendations from the Evidence Review and planning to implement them over the coming years.

A Data Review currently underway is the final deliverable of the Evidence Review. This Data Review aims 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 likelihood of lethal outcomes. It is due for completion in 2026. While the Data Review is focused on examining

the current MARAM risk factors, the findings may provide insight into any new risk factors that need to be considered for inclusion.

In addition to the Data and Evidence Reviews findings, Judge Sanger's recommendation will inform future updates to the evidence-based risk factors, including about pregnancy/new birth.

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

[REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Peta McCammon PSM
Secretary

04/03/2026