

Victoria's community safety story – stop violence at its source

2026-27 pre-budget submission



Acknowledgement of country

No to Violence acknowledges First Nations Peoples across these lands; the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters. We pay respect to all Elders, past, present and emerging. We acknowledge a deep connection with country which has existed over 60,000 years. We acknowledge sovereignty was never ceded, this was and always will be First Nation's land.

About No to Violence

No to Violence is growing the movement to end men's use of family violence. For over 30 years, we have been working directly with men who use family violence to support them to change.

Our expertise in their beliefs, attitudes, behaviour and choices has enabled us to develop standards, programs and training, lead policy development, and fulfil our role as the largest peak body in Australia for organisations and individuals working with men to end family violence.

As a feminist organisation, the safety of women and children is at the centre of everything we do. It is by ending men's violence that families can have happier, safer and more dignified and fulfilled lives.

Our members come from a diverse range of professional and community backgrounds and work in a number of settings including the community sector, government and private practice.

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Men's Referral Service

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Summary of Recommendations

Reform systems to keep victim-survivors safer

1. Develop and fund a **dedicated strategy focused on men using violence**.
2. Introduce an **appropriate oversight mechanism** to replicate responsibilities previously performed by the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor.
3. Victorian government to **conduct a systems abuse audit** to reduce the weaponisation of government systems against victim-survivors and build safety-by-design principles into audited systems.
4. Task the newly created Statewide Partnership group for The Orange Door with a **review of TOD'S engagement approach to men using violence**.
5. **Enable rapid referrals** across The Orange Door network to ensure **men using violence reach services earlier and more often**.

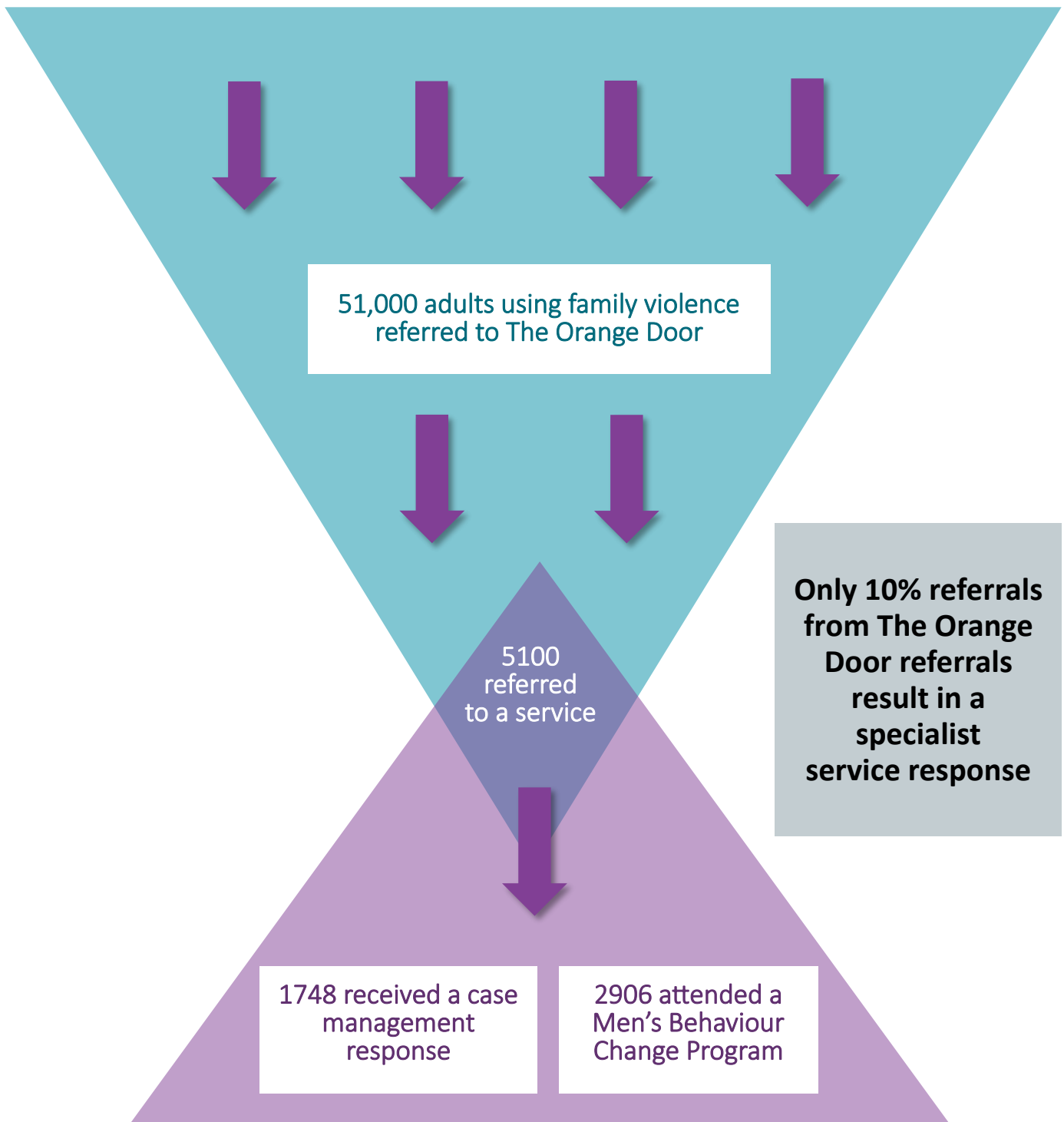
Give practitioners the tools they need to intervene earlier

6. Collect **better data to build the evidence base** needed to develop an **integrated continuum of responses** to people using family violence.
7. Invest in an integrated continuum of responses to **tackle gaps in earlier intervention**.
8. Expand and **scale responses statewide so children and young people showing signs of using family violence get the support they need to stop**.

Prioritise greater community safety by stopping violence at its source

9. Systematise centring victim-survivor safety in work with men using violence by providing **dedicated funding and associated targets for Family Safety Contact work** in contracts for services working with people using violence.
10. Urgently **uplift program places by at least 100%** to increase Men's Behaviour Change places from 4400 places to 8800 and case management places from 1300 to 2600 a year for the next two years for men using violence.
11. Introduce a **cross-departmental fund** to ensure availability of appropriately tailored interventions for men using violence.
12. **Adequately fund the Adult Using Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management framework (MARAM) rollout** by restoring workforce development funding to its original level. Provide at least double this amount to **support the rollout of the Children and Young Person MARAM**.

The Hourglass of Missed Opportunities¹



¹ Too few people using violence are identified because mechanisms are scant and sources outside of criminal justice responses go under utilised. From there an unacceptable proportion of people using violence are converted to referrals into the intake and assessment function and even fewer receive a service which would keep them in view for longer and offer behaviour change opportunities. Police and intervention order data from [2023-24 Crime Statistics Agency](#) data reported on the Family Violence Dashboard, The Orange Door data from [The Orange Door, 2023-24 Annual Service Delivery Report](#) and service response data from the [Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Annual Report 2023-24](#).

Executive summary

Community safety is a key concern for many Victorians. Media reporting has focused on robberies and assaults with knives, driving policy announcements including bans on machetes, rolling back recent bail law reforms, and increased penalties for young people. Despite another year of horrifying fatal escalations of family violence, policy announcements have failed to prioritise this vitally important community safety issue.

The scale of adult and childhood experiences of abuse and neglect and, crucially, estimates of men using violence are enormous.

- An estimated 1,120,337 Victorian men use violence over their lifetime – 35% of the male population or 1 in 3 men²
- 992,300 Victorian women experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15 – 30% of the female population or 1 in 3 women³
- An estimated 2,081,117 Victorians are likely to have experienced physical abuse as children- 32% of the total population;
- 1,853,494 experienced sexual abuse as children- 28% of the total population;
- 2,009,578 experienced emotional abuse as children- 31% of the total population;
- 578,810 experienced neglect as children- 9% of the total population; and
- 2,575,382 were exposed to family violence in childhood – 39% of the total population.⁴

The economic, health and social costs to victim-survivors cannot continue to stack up. Stopping violence, and creating safer communities for all, requires stopping violence at its source.

Less than 5,000 places in programs for people using violence are available, leaving **police and courts’ ‘set and forget’ approach as the dominant response**. Service responses for men using violence are designed to maximise victim-survivor’s safety through ongoing and dynamic risk assessment and management and encourage responsibility taking through group psychoeducational family violence program content. These responses are crucial for monitoring compliance with intervention and parenting orders, police contact involving one or multiple victim-survivor households, and other indicators of escalating violence. A police or court response alone cannot achieve these complex outcomes.

² [Ten to Men \(Australian Institute of Family Studies, 2025\)](#) found 1 in 3 men (35%) involved in their longitudinal study self-reported using violence and estimate 120,000 men start using violence every year. The [most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics census](#) (2021) recorded 3,200,963 males in Victoria. Assuming 35% of Victorian males use violence in their lifetime, 1,120,337 men at 2021 population levels could be expected to use violence in Victoria at some point in their life.

³ The most recent [Australian Bureau of Statistics Personal Safety Survey 2021-22](#) (released in 2023) estimated 999,300 Victorian women had experienced physical or sexual violence since the age of 15, based on a sample of self-reported data.

⁴ The [Australian Child Maltreatment Study](#) estimated 32% of all Australians experienced physical abuse in childhood, 28.5% experienced sexual abuse, 30.9% experienced emotional abuse, 8.9% experienced neglect, and 39.6% were exposed to domestic violence. These figures were extrapolated to the Victorian population using figures recorded at the most recent [Australian Bureau of Statistic census \(2021\)](#). Original findings published in Matthews et al. (2023) The prevalence of child maltreatment in Australia. *Medical Journal of Australia* 218 (6).

In 2023-24:

- 57,202 people using violence were responded to by police
- 51,000 adults using family violence are referred to The Orange Door. Yet a staggering, **41,820 did not receive a service response**⁵
- 35,513 applications for a Family Violence Intervention Order were made to courts
- 21,793 breaches of intervention orders were recorded
- 1,779 incidents resulted in community-based sentences
- 2,786 incidents resulted in custodial sentences⁶
- **Just 10% of men referred to The Orange Door, or 5100, received a response from dedicated specialist family violence services.**

Progress has stalled despite almost a decade of family violence reform, supported by billions of dollars in funding and unprecedented government commitment to ending violence. Most recent statistics show **Victoria is responding to men using violence too late and victim-survivors to bear the brunt of this inaction.** A comprehensive, integrated approach to stopping violence at its source is urgently needed to accelerate progress and improve safety. Victim-survivors cannot wait. They deserve action now.

Right now, efforts to stop violence at its source reaches only a small minority of men using violence. Victoria needs to do much more, much earlier, to truly shift the dial to respond to the scale of this problem.

- We must ensure our systems are strong, capable of identifying men using violence and able to respond earlier
- The gateway to the service system needs immediate intervention to improve rates of referrals into specialist services
- More specialist responses must be supported so risk is closely monitored and collective knowledge on stopping violence at its source can grow

Realising this **requires a dedicated holistic strategy to engage and respond to people using violence.**

⁵ [The Orange Door, 2023-24 Annual Service Delivery Report.](#)

⁶ Police, intervention order and sentencing figures based on [2023-24 Crime Statistics Agency](#) data reported on the Family Violence Dashboard.

Reform systems to keep victim-survivors safer

1. Develop and fund a **dedicated strategy** focused on men using violence.
2. Introduce an **appropriate oversight mechanism** to replicate responsibilities previously performed by the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor.

Stopping men's violence is the heart of Victoria's family violence reform efforts but the rate of men using violence continues to rise.⁷ Men's violence features in all key policy documents but remains out of focus. Throughout consultation for this submission, we heard men using violence are not treated as a priority across far too many government systems.

No to Violence sees a burning need for strategic coordination of disparate areas of work related to men's violence. Right now opportunities to ensure systems are strong and keep victim-survivors safer are routinely missed. A recent coronial inquest found a man who killed his partner in front of their children was referred to The Orange Door but went unresponded to for weeks before the case was eventually closed.⁸ We have been advised similar scenarios are unfortunately commonplace.

Without a point of connection and coordination to track progress on workstreams to address men's violence, we are concerned men using violence will continue to fall down priority lists and critical opportunities to stop violence at its source will continue to be missed. Queensland and New South Wales have already progressed state strategies.⁹ Victoria lags behind them. **No to Violence strongly recommends the Victorian government develop a dedicated strategy on men using violence.**

Work to keep Victoria's family violence system and response strong is also lacking the critical oversight once provided by the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor. Progress towards family violence reform areas, including men using violence, must be monitored to ensure changes are having the desired effect. The Monitor also remains an important source of evidence. Many areas covered have not been actioned and more recent robust sources of evidence are scant. We recommend re-instituting this critical function through a new oversight mechanism which can deliver on responsibilities the FVRIM previously performed.

Stamp out systems abuse

3. Victorian government to **conduct a systems abuse audit** to reduce the weaponisation of government systems against victim-survivors and build safety-by-design principles into audited systems.

Family, friends, workplaces, community organisations and government departments often identify people using violence, but, for many reasons, are fearful or unsure about what to do next. Community family violence knowledge is unfortunately heavily influenced by common myths, in turn increasing stigma and shame for victim-survivors and obscuring the true scale of violence in communities.¹⁰

⁷ The recent release of [Crime Statistics Agency data](#) on family violence found rates have risen 7.7% in the last year.

⁸ Coroner's Court (2025) [Finding in case COR 2022 006944](#).

⁹ Queensland released [Broadening the Focus](#) in 2024 and New South Wales is imminently due to release their own strategy.

¹⁰ Coumarelos et al. (2023) [Attitudes Matter: The 2021 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey \(NCAS\), Findings for Australia](#).

Those working in government systems and services are also community members and subject to the same influence of myth-driven misunderstandings. Like community responses, government systems and services have traditionally ignored people using violence and placed responsibility for preventing and responding to violence on victim-survivors. This means people turn away from the person causing the harm and opportunities to address the source of violence are lost. People using violence can weaponise a lack of attention on them and use this as justification for continuing, escalating and entrenching violence.^{11 12}

The tendency to ignore men using violence and unintentionally shame or stigmatise victim-survivors is a key enabler of systems abuse. This form of abuse is recognised in legal systems and has been increasingly recognised as a driving force behind financial abuse but its broader impact across government services is only beginning to come to light.¹³

Service provider insight

“The work we do is for the victims and survivors so they don’t have to go through this again. Sometimes survivors are just not ready to leave the relationship but this excludes them from services. If we do not flip our focus onto the person using violence, we say to the survivor that she is at fault. That is broken and wrong.”

– Lisa Smith, Manager Family Safety Services Latrobe Community Health Service

¹¹ Chung et al. (2020) [Improved Accountability: The role of perpetrator intervention systems](#).

¹² No to Violence hears from service providers that disconnections between government processes can give people using violence the impression that their behaviour is sanctioned. See other examples provided throughout this submission on how this occurs in policing practices and other systemic approaches. See also similar findings in Ailwood et al. (2022) [Beyond Women’s Voices: Towards a victim-survivor-centred theory of listening in law reform on violence against women](#); Helps (2024) [“She Tells Me I’m Pushy” is More Likely than the Man Directly Admitting to Being Pushy’: Practitioners’ Views on Screening and Assessing Risk of Intimate Partner Sexual Violence](#); Morgan et al. (2023) [You Can’t Pour From An Empty Cup: Strengthening our service and systems responses for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people who experience domestic and family violence](#); Waling et al. (2023) [‘I’m not going anywhere near that’: Expert stakeholder challenges with boys and young men regarding sexual consent](#).

¹³ See Economic Abuse Reference Group (2024) [Submission to the Review into Financial Abuse within the Tax System](#); National Domestic and Family Violence Bench Book (2023) [Systems Abuse](#); and Women’s Legal Services Victoria (2018) [“Officer She’s Psychotic and I Need Protection”: Police misidentification of the ‘primary aggressor’ in family violence incidents in Victoria](#).

‘Systems abuse’ is the misuse of government and service systems for the purposes of controlling victim-survivor/s of domestic, family and sexual violence.^{14 15} To prevent systems abuse, there needs to be a deep examination of the capacity for, and prevalence of, current government systems to be misused by people using domestic, family and sexual violence to enact more violence. This involves identifying opportunities within the current system that enable people using violence to interrupt, defer, prolong, or dismiss victim-survivors’ applications to legal and other government systems. Particular attention needs to be paid to instances where this may occur because of implicit biases based on structural discrimination, for example, racism, classism, ableism, homophobia and transphobia.

Government systems ranging from social security support through to transport are weaponised by people using violence for the purpose of abuse, recognised by the federal and New South Wales governments.¹⁶ These governments are conducting audits of gaps and loopholes exploited by people using violence. In doing so, more opportunities to identify people using violence will be uncovered and necessary supports for staff to respond will need to be developed.

Systems abuse blocks correct assessment of people using violence and, in some instances, drives the misidentification of victim-survivors as people using violence. The most recent available data revealed the proportion of respondents on Family Violence Reports who had previously been recorded as a victim were disproportionately high for women (58.7%) and higher still for Aboriginal women (79.4%), compared to the rate for men at 26.7%.¹⁷ Misidentification disrupts the lives of victim-survivors to the point where damage can be irreparable. Social and economic costs stack up for victim-survivors, including criminal records, incarceration, child removals, ongoing violence and continued stigma and discrimination.^{18 19}

No to Violence recommends conducting a cross-government audit to identify capacity for systems to be weaponised for abuse and close loopholes used for abuse.

Action on systems abuse can provide an impetus to strengthen embedding Victoria’s web of accountability by improving confidence for staff that their systems are working well to support victim-survivors, not furthering violence against them. The tools to support diverse workforces to identify users of violence already exist and are in the process of being rolled out across workforces - the Adult Using Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management and related tools remain a new addition to family violence frameworks. The web of accountability framework has been in place for some time but is yet to be meaningfully activated across whole of government.

¹⁴ See [National Domestic and Family Violence Bench Book \(2023\) Systems Abuse](#). For a case study of systems abuse using opportunities within social security: [Economic Justice Australia \(2022\) Dob-Ins and Domestic Violence: How Australia’s Welfare Fraud Tip Off Line Makes Women Less Safe](#).

¹⁵ See also, [Flat Out, Resisting Systemic Collusion Power and Control Wheel](#) and [Reeves et al. \(2023\) Incredible Women: Legal Systems Abuse, Coercive Control, and the Credibility of Victim-Survivors](#).

¹⁶ Public announcement of federal government systems abuse audit available [here](#).

¹⁷ [Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor \(2021\) Monitoring Victoria’s family violence reforms Accurate identification of the predominant aggressor](#). Victoria Government.

¹⁸ See [Thorne Harbour Health and No to Violence case study prepared for Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria](#) as an example of barriers which reinforce misidentification for marginalised communities.

¹⁹ See also [No to Violence’s 2024 submission to the Inquiry into capturing data on family violence perpetrators in Victoria](#).

The way Victoria responds to men using violence matters. Each interaction is an opportunity to show men using violence their behaviour is not warranted and will not be tolerated. However, expansion of identification and response needs to have built-in protections against misidentification of the predominant aggressor. Otherwise increasing formal identification of people using violence currently poses a serious risk of also increasing misidentification. **To prevent this, systems across state government must embed safety-by-design principles to address gaps identified through a cross-government audit.**²⁰

Systems abuse highlights that *family violence touches nearly every government department*. Many people using violence could be formally identified in universal service systems (for example by GPs and via social security), essential services (like financial services and utilities) and allied health (including mental health, gambling and substance misuse services). Systems abuse audits can assist government to shift the way we respond to people using violence, identify users of violence earlier and more often, and create greater safety for victim-survivors by lessening opportunities for abuse.

Unblock the intake and assessment point to reach more users of violence, more often

4. Task the newly created Statewide Partnership group for The Orange Door with a **review of TOD’S engagement approach to men using violence**.
5. **Enable rapid referrals** across The Orange Door network to **ensure men using violence reach services earlier and more often**.

Our members are deeply concerned that referrals from The Orange Door into their programs are extremely low. The Orange Door’s data shows **just 5100 men were referred to services – 10% of the total men referred into The Orange Door or an average of only 283 men a year for each of the 18 Orange Door regions.**²¹ NTV members working across the state tell us men are rarely reaching their services.

*Table 1: Response to adults using family violence who were referred to The Orange Door*²²

Adults using family violence recorded in TOD	51,000
Men who were referred to specialist service	5100
Men who did not receive a service	41,820

²⁰ Safety by Design principles set out that service providers have core responsibility for ensuring user safety; user dignity should be central; and transparency and accountability are hallmarks of a robust approach to safety. See [Centre for Economic Safety \(2022\) Designed to Disrupt: reimagining banking products to improve financial safety](#).

²¹ [The Orange Door, 2023-24 Annual Service Delivery Report](#).

²² [The Orange Door, 2023-24 Annual Service Delivery Report](#); [2023-24 Crime Statistics Agency](#) data reported on the Family Violence Dashboard

The most recent available data on The Orange Door response to men using violence showed 82% of the men referred to them disappeared from the view of services.²³ This means in 2023-24 alone, **41,820 men did not receive a response**. The Department of Families, Fairness and Housing funds 5,700 program places across case management and Men’s Behaviour Change Programs (MBCPs).²⁴ Places are left empty when referral points are unable to meaningfully engage with users of violence.

Responses to men using violence serve intersecting and mutually beneficial purposes. They strengthen accountability, keep them in view of systems so victim-survivors are safer, and offer the opportunity to learn about the impact of their violence and choose to change their behaviour. Right now, opportunities to improve community are limited because Victoria’s family violence system does not adequately focus on the source of violence – those using it to control and abuse.

The Victorian family violence system is designed to respond to people using violence who represent a high risk to their partner and family after they have been responded to by police and assessed by The Orange Door. This strategy is important for minimising deaths of family violence victims but misses the opportunity to reduce rates of violence. Too often, the most dangerous perpetrators are left free to escalate abuse or target new victims. Even men representing significant risk **may not be responded to by The Orange Door for weeks or months depending on the region.**²⁵

Service provider insight

“The Orange Door currently has very limited engagement strategies in place for working with people who use violence. This presents concerning risks—not only for women and children, but also for the men themselves.”

– Allison Wainwright, CEO Family Life

As experts in working with users of violence, NTV’s members understand most perpetrators are hard-to-reach and hard-to-engage. Successful engagement in high-stress situations requires specialist skills. **Men using violence are often accustomed to escaping responsibility for their behaviour.** Instead responsibility is too often diverted to the victim-survivors of their violence. Failure of The Orange Doors to engage with men misses a crucial opportunity to disrupt this cycle.

As a result, Victorian service providers are increasingly frustrated by the impact of this log-jam in the ability to end men’s use of violence. Service providers want to engage much earlier with people before use of abuse becomes entrenched. They want to work with people using abuse who have just been responded to police, served an intervention order, are facing criminal charges or potentially losing access to their children and are more motivated to engage with services.

²³ [The Orange Door, 2023-24 Annual Service Delivery Report.](#)

²⁴ [Department of Families, Fairness and Housing Annual Report 2023-24.](#)

²⁵ A [recent coronial inquest](#) found a man who murdered his partner in front of their children was never contacted The Orange Door, despite being referred and a risk assessment for his partner determining a serious risk of lethal violence.

When services are prevented from responding in a timely manner, when motivation for engagement is higher, *the person using violence often falls out of sight of the system altogether*, compromising the safety of those they have harmed.²⁶ Activating opportunities to engage earlier and more often requires a specialist approach that *gets people using violence in the door and keeps them there*.

Stopping violence earlier reduces costs to victim-survivors, communities and government caused by unchecked use of violence. Service providers in areas where demand management is a key part of their local service response report much higher engagement with people using violence. During demand management, initial intake and assessment occurs at The Orange Door and comprehensive assessments are undertaken by experts in engaging with people using violence with service providers. No to Violence is advocating for **rapid referral strategies to be activated across The Orange Door network** so people using violence are *kept in view more often* and *for longer*. Financial savings gained need to be used to support additional program places.

Rapid referral also allows breathing space for The Orange Door Statewide Partnership Group to review engagement approaches to users of violence, train the workforce in the Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Management tool for Adults Using Family Violence, and embed the tool in practice leadership and workplace culture. At the conclusion of the trial, a more accurate picture of need, demand and supply will be available to inform future planning for this sector.

Service provider insight

“Since we moved to The Orange Door model, our referrals have plummeted. We really struggle to get referrals translated from The Orange Door L17s into case management.

It is awful because we are the number 1 Local Government Area in the state for family violence reports.

We have used the demand management strategy a couple of times and it did work really well. But as soon as intake and assessment moves back into TOD, referral numbers drop straight off again.

Otherwise, we get maybe two referrals a month if we're lucky.

People using violence are coming through The Orange Door and they do not come out. They wait for weeks and weeks and weeks in The Orange Door for a service and then they just go.”

- *Kathy Dickinson, Executive Manager, Family, Youth and Children's Services Gippsland Lakes Complete Health*

²⁶ This imperative is outlined in the [Family Violence Outcomes Framework](#) but is yet to be meaningfully activated through system responses.

If the Victorian government is serious about ensuring community safety, it must commit to a family violence system which can *respond to every man who is identified and direct him to services designed to end cycles of violence and keep victim-survivors safer*. To this end, No to Violence recommends tasking practice experts with a practical review to improve engagement with users of violence to reach more men beginning to use violence, more often. The newly established Statewide Partnership Group for The Orange Door is an ideal mechanism for this task because of its mandate to resolve practice issues across the entire Orange Door network. Lessons from the review can then be fed straight back into The Orange Door, operationalised and measured to aid continuous improvement.

Peak body insight

“We don’t ration police or other emergency services so why are we rationing services designed to stop violence at its source? Every man using violence must be able to receive an appropriate service response.

- Phillip Ripper, CEO No to Violence

Give practitioners the tools they need to intervene earlier

Too often government responses make victim-survivors wait until violence escalates before intervening with men using family violence. When violence is left to escalate until the criminal justice system becomes the primary response, critical opportunities to lessen harm earlier are lost. To reduce and end the use of violence, the Victorian Government needs to place greater priority for referral to services for people using violence who are beginning to use violence or otherwise represent lower risk. Doing so requires a targeted and effective service response available for every man identified.²⁷ NTV’s members want to respond earlier rather than allow violence to escalate before intervening, including to young people, many of whom are also often victim-survivors in their own right, others who are at risk or beginning to use violence and those using violence not commonly recognised or responded to by police.

Make use of existing evidence to build an evidence base for earlier interventions

6. Collect better data to **build the evidence base** needed to develop an integrated continuum of responses to men using family violence.

NTV members want to expand their options for working with people using violence so they can reach more people causing harm, much earlier. This requires utilising existing information and developing new evidence on what works best, for who and at what time to end violence. However, current data measurements do not contribute towards building the evidence-base and the meaningful data service providers hold is not being utilised by government.

²⁷ The [Family Violence Outcomes Framework](#) outlines need for the right intervention at the right time for greater perpetrator accountability and behaviour change potential.

Output measurements prioritise logging attendance rather than victim-survivor safety, risk-management and behaviour change, leaving practitioners' work to shift entrenched use of violence unrecognised and losing sight of the knowledge needed to build the evidence-base in the process. By the government ensuring data collection meaningfully measures the impact of interventions this will enable critical learnings on what works best to shift entrenched behaviours for people across different stages of using violence.

Insights held by service providers should inform growth of family violence responses to men. The Landmark Perpetrator Study is a critical opportunity to build the evidence needed to develop policy and programs to intervene earlier to reduce harm for victim-survivors. This study should make use of existing data sources, including those of service providers, and draw on evidence from promising pilot programs that were allowed to lapse.

Important lessons are left sitting on shelves when they should be fed back into practice. Practitioners are seeing increased complexity in client presentations. This is a sign of entrenched violence alongside overlapping and intersecting issues, including substance misuse and poor mental health.

Invest in an integrated continuum of responses to tackle gaps in earlier intervention

7. Invest in an integrated continuum of responses to tackle gaps in earlier intervention.

Historically, Victoria has been a global leader in building responses to men using violence, however momentum waned in recent years. There is a renewed impetus to focus on stopping violence at its source through the federal focus on exploring the potential to better standardise and scale a range of intervention types. For example, the Innovative Perpetrator Response fund has recently been extended.²⁸ This initiative scales existing initiatives in jurisdictions where the response was not yet available and builds in evaluation so the evidence base can continue to grow and strengthen.

Victoria was a key initiating force in the development of many responses now becoming nationally available. Building on this success is a key opportunity for Victoria to celebrate its leadership on family violence and drive new innovations towards whole-of-government ownership of this issue.

Victoria can be proud of the range of interventions it offers.

High risk responses like:

- Risk Assessment and Management Panels
- Changing Ways Serious Risk pilot program

Readiness and change maintenance supports like:

- Case management
- Pre-program support
- Post-program support

Family violence and combined interventions

Residential-based interventions

First Nations led responses

Diverse cohort responses for people from marginalised backgrounds including GBT men, women and gender diverse people and people with cognitive disability

²⁸ [Announcement made by federal Minister for Social Services, Tanya Plibersek in September 2025.](#)

The range of interventions available has been responsive to emerging need but more needs to be done to meaningfully respond to all men using violence. A particular focus is needed to stop violence earlier when children and young people show signs of using family violence and when men are identified for the first time.

Victoria's system responds to the most serious risk but not well to emerging use of violence. This approach leaves victim-survivors to carry avoidable burden and harm. It is essential Victoria invest in earlier intervention, through a mechanism such as the Early Intervention Investment Fund, to prevent avoidable harm to victim-survivors and the broader community.

Service provider insight

"I don't think we are promoting a men's service for a first time user of violence. It is really promoted and actioned as being for recidivists or high risk offenders.

There is opportunity around how we can target those first time users. It is a different intervention because they might have not ever have touched a service system.

They have got to fund accordingly to be able to do the earlier intervention work and allow us to target this work, because all we work with is high risk."

- Lisa Robinson, Director Family Safety and Therapeutic Services Meli

Invest in developmentally appropriate responses to stop violence used by children and young people

8. **Expand and scale responses statewide to children and young people showing signs of using family violence** so they get the support they need to stop.

A key area requiring urgent investment and program development is with **children and young people beginning to use violence**. This should include violence happening in the home, e.g. towards parents, caregivers and siblings, as well as violence towards intimate partners.

It is critical boys receive support early to address root causes of violent behaviour. Most often use of violence by children and young people is an indicator they have suffered abuse themselves. These children must be supported as victim-survivors in their own right with developmentally appropriate responses made available to them to address specific behaviours alongside the general health and mental health and other services they need.

Children who experience violence and receive no support report devastating impacts on their health, wellbeing, relationships and economic security later in life.²⁹ Criminalising these children only deepens these devastating impacts. No to Violence rejects criminalisation of children for family violence offences.

²⁹ See for example Lawrence D, et al. (2023) [The association between child maltreatment and health risk behaviours and conditions throughout life: The Australian Child Maltreatment Study](#).

Experience of violence in childhood is widespread in Victoria.

- An estimated 2,081,117 Victorians are likely to have experienced physical abuse as children - 32% of the total population;
- 1,853,494 experienced sexual abuse - 28% of the total population;
- 2,009,578 experienced emotional abuse - 31% of the total population;
- 578,810 experienced neglect - 9% of the total population; and
- 2,575,382 were exposed to family violence – 39% of the total population³⁰

Earlier this year, Victorian Legal Aid found children were receiving a punitive response to behavioural issues.³¹ This is unacceptable. Networks of support for children and young people must be made available in tandem with the rollout of the Children and Young People Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management tool. Cycles of violence and despair for children and young people will continue without appropriate, effective and accessible responses to help healing and recovery.

It is crucial Victoria continues to **grow support responses to adolescents using violence in the home and children and young people who are victim-survivors in their own right so cycles of violence and despair do not continue.** Members want to see these supports scaled statewide so children and young people are not subject to a postcode lottery for support.

Early intervention when young people use violence against their intimate partners is crucial to end cycles of violence.³² Attention on young people using intimate partner violence is scant in part because service attention is directed at the most serious risk cases, and not focused on opportunities to intervene early intervention. This means young people identified early receive no response, sending them a message that using violence is tolerated and allowing use of violence to escalate and become entrenched.

Service provider insight

“In the Central Highlands, we see the impact of intergenerational trauma. The entrenched cycle needs to be addressed to stop this cycle of despair – early intervention and prevention should be the focus of Government funding. Let’s do more to keep children out of the statutory care system”
- Wendy Sturgess, CEO Child and Family Services Ballarat

³⁰ The [Australian Child Maltreatment Study](#) estimated 32% of all Australians experienced physical abuse in childhood, 28.5% experienced sexual abuse, 30.9% experienced emotional abuse, 8.9% experienced neglect, and 39.6% were exposed to domestic violence. These figures were extrapolated to the Victorian population using figures recorded at the most recent [Australian Bureau of Statistic census \(2021\)](#). Original findings published in Matthews et al. (2023) The prevalence of child maltreatment in Australia. Medical Journal of Australia 218 (6).

³¹ Victorian Legal Aid (2025) [Feeling supported not stuck: Rethinking intervention orders for children and young people.](#)

³² No to Violence partnered with researchers alongside our members, Youth Support and Advocacy Service and Drummond Street, to inform [best practice principles needed to develop responses to young people using intimate partner violence.](#)

Prioritise greater community safety by stopping violence at its source

Family violence reforms have not yet delivered the coordinated response needed to keep people using violence in view across the service system. The current response is akin to a **revolving door system**, enabling violence to continue unchecked.

Reducing and ending family violence is not possible without rapidly increasing the scale of appropriate, effective and available services to respond to men using violence, in a more targeted way, and much, much earlier. This must include increasing existing program places across program readiness for people using violence, case management and therapeutic 1:1 work, targeted MBCPs and post-program support to maintain behaviour change. Responses need to be coordinated, connected and mutually reinforcing to deliver maximum benefit for victim-survivors and the community.

Keeping victim-survivors at the centre

9. Systematise centring victim-survivor safety in work with men using violence by providing **dedicated funding and associated targets for Family Safety Contact work** in contracts for services working with people using violence.

Victim-survivors know what is right for them – they deserve meaningful choice of service pathway.³³

There are two dominant pathways to support victim-survivors experiencing family violence – the shelter system and through the sector working directly with people using violence.³⁴

For many victim-survivors, the support provided through MBCPs may be the first dedicated support they receive. When the perpetrator is attending a program, Family Safety Contact workers and associated case management is available to victim-survivors. This pathway allows victim-survivors, including children, parents and other family members, to access the support they need while their safety is carefully managed. It also provides men’s behaviour change practitioners with key insights to enable them to work more impactfully with the person using violence to critically examine narratives about their use of violence and the justifications they use.

Family Safety Contact work was emphasised in the current Victorian Minimum Standards for Men’s Behaviour Change Programs (2018) following advocacy from the Expert Advisory Committee on Perpetrator Interventions, set up to support implementation of the Royal Commission into Family Violence.³⁵ However, **this critical component has *still* not been elevated to the centre of practice as the funding model does not recognise its importance.**



³⁴ [Exploring the interface between Family Safety Advocates and Victim Survivor Practitioners: Discussion Paper \(2025\) Safe and Equal and No to Violence.](#)

³⁵ Family Safety Victoria (2018) [Men’s Behaviour Change Minimum Standards.](#)

Year-after-year this issue is raised as a key concern by NTV's members. **It is crucial Family Safety Contact work is measured and funded in line with demand.** This requires Victorian Government contracts to assign dedicated funding and associated targets for Family Safety Contact work. NTV's members want Family Safety Contact work funded separately to general program funding and measured to drive greater understanding of its importance and value.

Double Men's Behaviour Change and case management places for the next two years to support increased demand

10. Urgently **uplift program places by at least 100%** to increase Men's Behaviour Change places from 4400 places to 8800 and case management places from 1300 to 2600 a year for the next two years for people using violence.

At present, **just 10% of men referred to The Orange Door are receiving a service response.** We expect rapid referrals activated across The Orange Door network (as recommended above) would require at least 100% uplift in program places – catering to 20% of the men identified at The Orange Door.

Uplift must be applied to the main programmatic offerings for men using violence as not all men referred to services are ready to participate in a Men's Behaviour Change Program. Those men are often held in case management where barriers to readiness are addressed. Case management is increasingly applied prior to Men's Behaviour Change program admittance as complexity in client presentations has become more common. Barriers include substance misuse, poor mental health and resistance to change when men do not believe they are using family violence.

Introduce a cross-departmental fund to build tailored options to reach more men earlier

11. **Introduce a cross-departmental fund** to ensure availability of appropriately tailored interventions for men using violence.

Government initiatives to build innovative ways of working with people using violence needs to be informed by emerging program data and scaled up in line with demand. To do this, **funding needs to be aligned with the referral pathways people using violence take into services.** This includes mandated pathways through requirements in child protection, community corrections and family violence intervention orders, as well as voluntary pathways when men are encouraged by their family, friends and community or through intrinsic motivation seek help.

Initiating this fund begins with developing a clearer understanding of where men using family violence are being identified and directed to programs, alongside the enablers and barriers for their engagement. The current lack of visibility on referral pathways into programs makes demand for these programs and the funding needed to deliver targeted and effective programs difficult to ascertain.

A significant number of people using violence are referred by child protection to complete a family violence program and many men are referred from the Family Court. There needs to be a specialised response to these men. For example, programs with a parenting focus, such as Caring Dads, delivered by Kids First, Anglicare and Centre for Non-Violence, and Drummond Street's Futures Free From Violence, address use of violence and parenting skills at the same time.

The cost of responding to people using violence should be shared across the departments and agencies who rely on this response. A cost sharing model could be used to support the development of tailored responses to suit the needs of referring agencies. The model should build in evaluation, similar to responses funded through the Innovative Perpetrator Response to support scaling effective responses across Victoria and elsewhere.

Fund workforce development to embed new Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Management tools

- 12. Adequately fund the Adult Using Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management framework (MARAM) rollout** by restoring workforce development funding to its original level. Provide at least double this amount to **support the rollout of the Children and Young Person MARAM.**

The rollout of the Multi Agency Risk Assessment and Management (MARAM) tool for Adults Using Family Violence (AUFV) will help specialist and non-specialist family violence workforces to engage more confidently with people using violence. Strong MARAM application means more workforces understand their role in dynamic and ongoing risk assessments – strengthening focus on men using violence, keeping them in view for longer, and improving outcomes for victim-survivors and the community. **When the person using violence is not assessed for risk, key indicators can be missed and connections between repeat violence obscured.**

Service provider insight

“People who work at The Orange Doors tell me the same story that they feel under quite a lot of pressure working with men. They are not comfortable doing that and don't feel adequately trained to either.”

- Glenn Davies, individual family violence practitioner and educator

Uptake and of this tool has been slow and embedding it is considered burdensome in some workplaces. Members tell us application of the AUFV MARAM is patchy in a number of key workforces, including child protection, corrections and within some Orange Doors. It is clear more support is needed to get workforces ready to play their role in perpetrator accountability. Doing so means properly funding MARAM rollouts and tailoring responses to maximise successful integration. **The Children and Young People MARAM similarly needs support to maximise its utility and potential to change Victoria's community safety story.**

Funding must be restored at least to previously contracted levels, cut by 25% as a result of the most recent budget allocation. Supporting diverse and disconnected workforces to identify and respond to users of violence is critical to Victoria's aim to improve community safety and reduce family violence. **Rolling out a new tool with 75% of the previously available funding allocation asks all workforces needing this support to deliver more impact with less resources available to support them.** Without proper supports in place, the intention of the MARAM to deliver greater safety risks being undone through inconsistent and inappropriate application of the tool.