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SUMMARY REPORT

Victorian Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework 5-year Evidence Review

December 2023

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Issued to: Family Safety Victoria
Description: Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework 5-year Evidence Review - Summary Report

The Review Team has had the privilege to talk with many dedicated individuals throughout this Review, including victim survivors, family violence practitioners, academics and people working for other specialist or universal service providers and government bodies. We wish to thank all victim survivors who generously shared their views and experiences with the Review Team, and we acknowledge the courage of all victim survivors of family violence, and those who advocate for a safer community. Insights and reflections made by victim survivor lived experience advocates in this Review have been crucial in developing the findings and recommendations. We also take this opportunity to thank all those working in the family violence sector who gave up their time to talk to the Review Team. These conversations provided valuable insights and we witnessed the remarkable dedication of these practitioners. Finally, we wish to thank those at Family Safety Victoria who provided invaluable assistance and advice to the Review Team.

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OVERVIEW

This Summary Report provides an overview of the findings and recommendations from the first 5-year evidence review of the Victorian Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM). *Allen + Clarke* was engaged by Family Safety Victoria (FSV) to undertake the first periodic review of MARAM's operation as required under section 194 of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic). The Review sought to answer two key questions:

Figure 1: Review Questions

01

QUESTION 1

Does MARAM reflect the current evidence of best practices of family violence risk assessment and risk management?

02

QUESTION 2

What changes are required (if any) to ensure that MARAM is consistent with those best practices?

CONTEXT

The Victorian Family Violence Multi-Agency Risk Assessment and Management Framework (MARAM) was developed in response to Recommendation 1 of the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence (the Royal Commission). MARAM builds on the Victorian Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework (also known as the common risk assessment framework, or 'CRAF') and is informed by the issues and gaps identified by the Royal Commission, a range of coronial inquiries including the Coronial Inquest into the death of Luke Geoffrey Batty, and the Review of the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework (CRAF): Final Report (2016).

MARAM comprises:

- Part 11 of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic)
- the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Management Framework legislative instrument approved by the Minister in accordance with section 189 of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008*
- the MARAM Framework policy document
- a suite of victim survivor-focused and perpetrator-focused MARAM Practice Guides, incorporating Identification, Brief, Intermediate and Comprehensive Risk Assessment and Risk Management tools
- an online platform to host the MARAM risk assessment and risk management (safety planning) tools, Tools for Risk Assessment and Management (TRAM) for use by Victorian agencies, including The Orange Door, and managed by FSV
- resources, tools and guidance for organisations to support their implementation and alignment activities.

CONTEXT

The objectives of the MARAM Framework are to:

- increase the safety of people experiencing family violence
- ensure the broad range of experiences across the spectrum of seriousness and presentations of risk are represented, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, diverse communities, children, older people and across all family and relationship types
- keep perpetrators in view and hold them accountable for their behaviours and actions
- guide alignment with MARAM for use across a broader range of organisations and sectors who have responsibilities to identify, assess and respond to family violence risk
- ensure consistent use of MARAM across these organisations and sectors.

MARAM aims to establish a system-wide shared understanding of family violence, guiding professionals across the continuum of specialist family violence, targeted and universal services, who provide services for victim survivors or perpetrators across the range of presentations and levels of family violence risk.

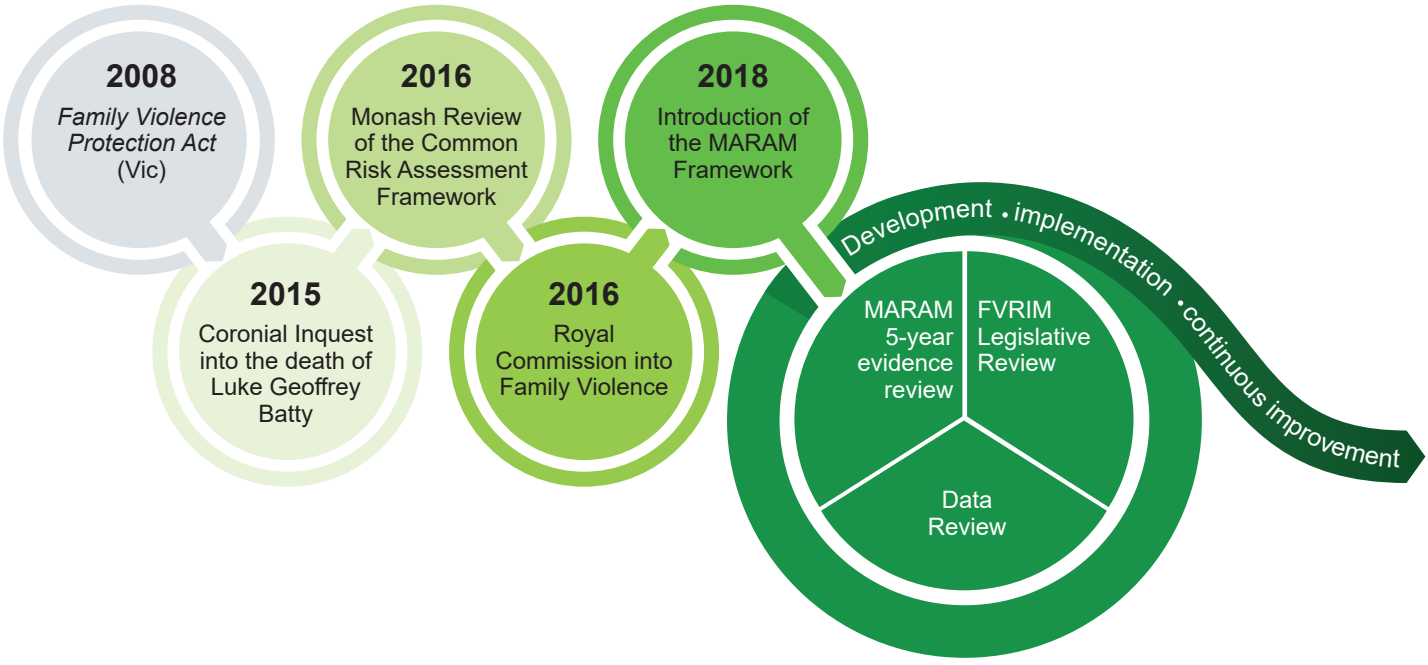
THE REVIEW ENVIRONMENT

The Review occurred concurrently with other reviews and was separate and complementary to a second part of the MARAM 5-Year Evidence Review (Data Review). The aim of the Data Review is to establish feasibility of data analysis, analyse data on the current MARAM evidence-based risk factors and assess their correlation to the presence and level of family violence risk of lethal outcomes. Consideration was given to the anticipated intersections between the two parts of the 5-Year Review.

The Review was also separate to the 5-year legislative review of the operation of Part 11 of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic). This review was led by the Family Violence Reform Implementation Monitor (FVRIM) under sections 144SA and 195 of the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* (Vic), which considered how effective the legal provisions of the Act have been in meeting their objectives.

Figure 2 depicts the timeline of events preceding the MARAM 5-year Evidence Review and the concurrent Reviews being undertaken. As conceptualised in Pillar 4 of MARAM, these Reviews are underpinned by an emphasis on systems, outcomes, and continuous improvement to ensure that MARAM continues to embed best-practice approaches for family violence risk assessment and management.

Figure 2: Timeline leading to the first MARAM Review

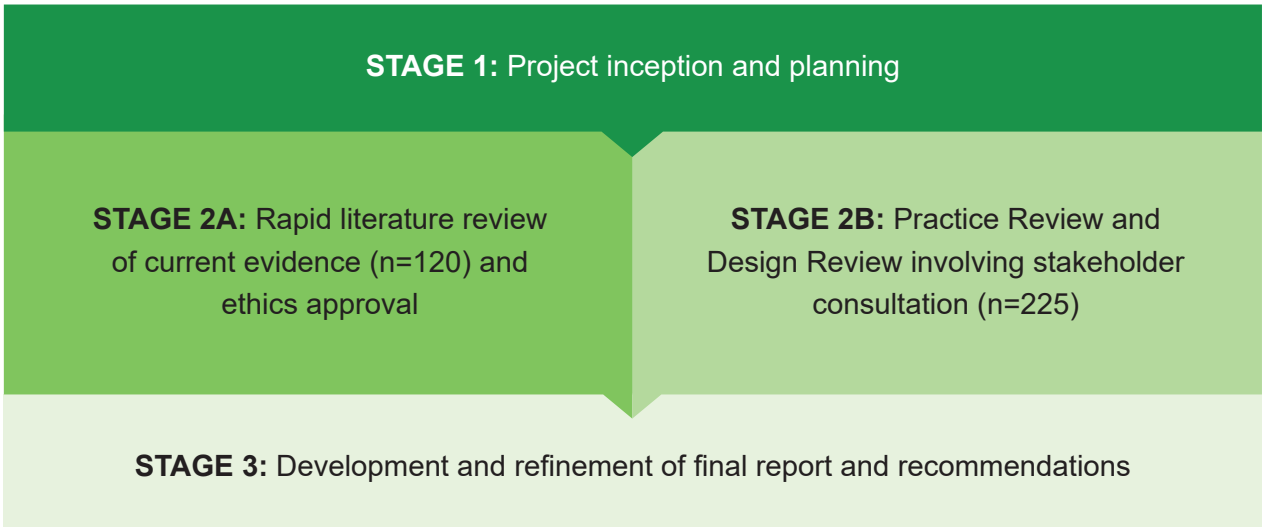


SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Review was informed by two key inputs: a rapid literature review and extensive stakeholder engagement.

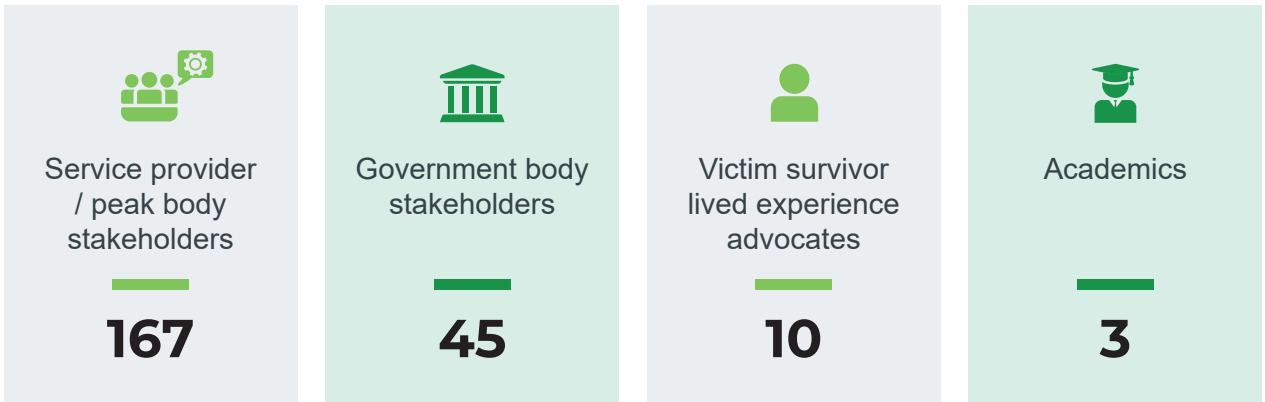
The Review comprised three stages:

Figure 3: Stages of the Review



Over the course of a year (November 2022 to November 2023), the Review Team reviewed approximately 120 documents and engaged with 225 stakeholders through interviews, focus groups, surveys and submissions. Stakeholders from a diverse range of sectors were engaged at various intervals during the Review to provide information and insights about the Review questions, and to help refine the findings and recommendations. The Review Team also had the privilege of engaging with Survivor Advocates and tireless frontline staff who work to support victim survivors of family violence. These views have shaped the findings and recommendations found throughout this Review.

Figure 4: Stakeholders engaged in the Review



SCOPE OF REVIEW

Figure 5: Data collection for Stage 2 of the review

STAGE 2: Practice and Design Review

The Review engaged with **225** participants from **81** organisations

01 Focus Groups (virtual)

28 focus groups held | 1.5hr duration

02 Interviews (virtual)

17 interviews held | 1hr duration

- Focus groups and interviews were based on semi-structured consultation questions underpinned by the two key Review questions.
- Consultation guides were tailored to specific stakeholder cohorts to ensure that the discussion concentrated on aspects most relevant to the knowledge and experience of those participants.
- The discussion was guided by semi-structured questions, but stakeholders were welcome to raise other relevant issues that were within scope of the Review, as appropriate.
- Two team members attended each focus group/interview, with one member facilitating and the other taking notes.
- Where informed consent was provided, focus groups and interviews were video-recorded.

03 Online Surveys

21 analysable responses received

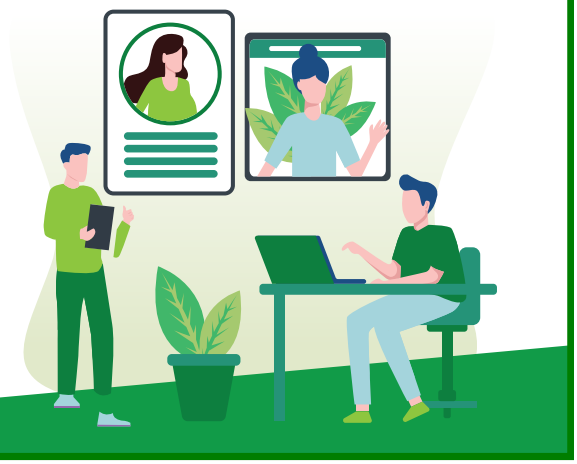
Practitioners (20), Victim survivors (1)

- Survey invitations were sent via email with a Qualtrics survey link.
- Survey questions featured free-text boxes for detailed participant feedback, ensuring a robust engagement approach.
- Incomplete survey responses were removed from the analysis.

04 Supplementary Feedback

39 additional inputs

- Some focus group and interview participants provided additional inputs and supplementary materials (including emails, reports, adapted tools, and summary guides).



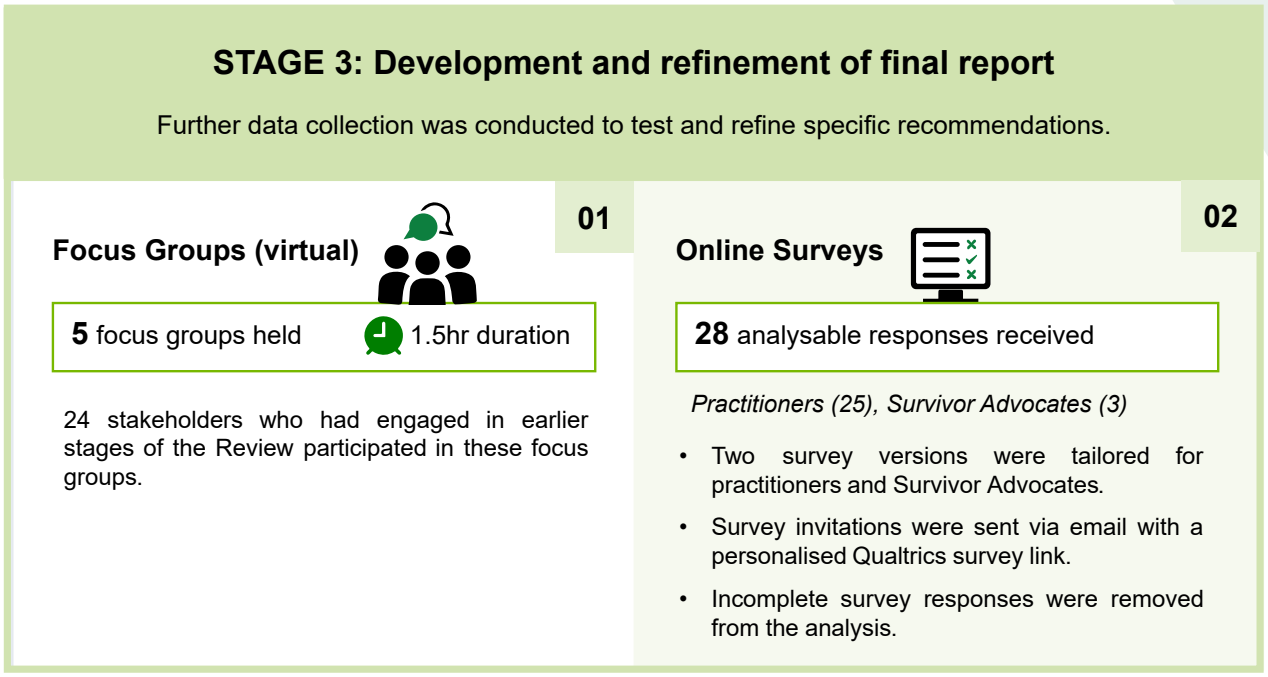
05 Written Submissions

9 written submissions received

- A brief discussion paper was provided to stakeholders to guide submissions and ensure they focused on relevant aspects of the Review.

SCOPE OF REVIEW

Figure 6: Data collection for Stage 3 of the Review



Resources in scope

MARAM resources in scope of this Review included:

- the MARAM legislative instrument and accompanying policy document
- MARAM victim survivor-focused Practice Guides, Risk Assessment and Management (Safety Planning) tools, and other supporting resources that are appendices to these Practice Guides.

MARAM resources not in scope for this Review included:

- perpetrator-focused MARAM Practice Guides and tools (released in 2021 and 2022)
- MARAM COVID-19 Practice Notes
- the materials in development during 2022-2023 to address direct risk and wellbeing assessment and management with children and young people (note that existing practice guidance relating to children and the existing Child Assessment tool were within scope of the Review).

LIMITATIONS

Some limitations of the Review should be acknowledged.

Literature Review limitations

Most of the literature and research focused on women and children, consistent with the well-established prevalence of family violence perpetrated by men against women and children. The Review found limited research relating to relationships across all communities and identities, and people of all genders.

Evidence in the current literature on the use of structured professional judgment (SPJ) in the family violence context is still emerging, with current research suggesting that there is a gap in relation to how risk assessments inform risk management practices.

The majority of the literature reviewed focused on risk assessment tools for family violence or intimate partner violence in a general sense, rather than defining the outcome of interest specifically as risk of recidivism or homicide. With regard to risk assessment tools, there was a paucity of research on which instrument characteristics (for example, specific instrument or length of instrument) were associated with predictive validity.

In the literature considered for the literature review, the Review team did not find evidence on:

- the use of sexual violence in non-intimate partner family violence contexts
- the use of sexual violence by adults using violence towards their own children or non-biological children of their partner.

There was also a gap in the literature in relation to children as victim survivors in their own right, as well as children across diverse communities and identities (with some notable exceptions). The Review therefore highlighted the need for more research in relation to these four points.

Practice and Design Review limitations

As many stakeholders did not have a high level of familiarity with the content of different MARAM resources (due to issues addressed in the Review Report), assessing the extent to which the MARAM Framework policy document and practice guidance was supporting professionals to accurately identify, assess and manage family violence risk (as required by the practice and design review) had some challenges. This was addressed by analysing stakeholder responses against the documents in scope and analysing the issues underpinning a lower level of familiarity with MARAM content.

The Review methodology anticipated the recruitment of victim survivors through interviews with stakeholders from workforces (by asking practitioners to identify victim survivors who have received services from their organisation and were potentially able and interested in participating in the Review). This option was not taken up by any victim survivors during the course of the Review. Nevertheless, the Review engaged with a number of Survivor Advocates who were able to provide first-hand insights into MARAM risk assessment and management.

FINDINGS

A clear theme that arose during the Review was the depth of appreciation that people felt for MARAM. Across a range of sectors, it was considered a valuable central repository of information, and a single source of truth to support a shared understanding of family violence and subsequent risk assessment and management practice.

MARAM was also considered to have had a significant impact in promoting a more integrated service response by improving consistency and breaking down silos. Indeed, collaboration within and across sectors has improved since the introduction of MARAM and the information sharing schemes. However, these systems and ways of working are maturing and there is room to improve. Where collaboration and information sharing are ineffective, this is often due to matters outside the scope of this Review, including resourcing, capacity, and training needs.

Framing and structure of MARAM

The MARAM Framework policy document is framed around three key parts including an overview of family violence and the reform context, a summary of system architecture (including the legislative, policy and practice environments) and the four conceptual pillars around which MARAM is framed. The four pillars aim to establish a system-wide approach and shared responsibility for family violence risk assessment and management. Figure 7 depicts the four pillars of MARAM.

Figure 7: Four conceptual pillars underpinning MARAM

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FINDINGS

The evidence collected for this Review does not indicate the need for any changes to the structure of the MARAM Framework.

This Review has found that MARAM has significantly improved practice in relation to Pillars 1, 2 and 4. Consistent with the maturity model (due for release in 2024), further focus on Pillar 3 is expected to improve clarity of responsibilities for risk assessment and management across a diverse range of workforces. The range of reviews and research underpinning MARAM support the development of the evidence base and continuous improvement, providing evidence of achievement towards Pillar 4.

MARAM largely reflects best practices

This Review has found that MARAM largely reflects current evidence of best practices including through its multi-agency approach, its adoption of the SPJ model, the policy of consistent and collaborative practice (Pillar 2), its use of a broad and consistent definition of family violence, use of an intersectional lens, and its conceptualisation of coercive control. However, the Review has found that MARAM is regarded by many stakeholders as focusing too heavily on family violence within heterosexual intimate partner relationships, and that family violence that occurs in other family relationships/contexts needs greater focus. While MARAM has improved consideration of diversity and intersectionality in family violence risk assessment and management, further work is required to properly embed these considerations throughout the entire risk assessment and risk management process. MARAM resources should continue to reflect the gendered nature of family violence while also accounting for the breadth of experience across all family relationships and communities.

How MARAM resources are used

Evidence informing the Review shows that the Practice Guides provide a comprehensive theoretical framework. However, the number of MARAM resources, their length, and challenges in navigating them are presenting barriers to accessing important information and guidance. This has impacted the extent to which the Practice Guides are being used, and in turn, the effectiveness of implementing the MARAM guidance and tools. In line with this finding, familiarity with the content of the practice guidance was generally low among those providing direct services to victim survivors. Stakeholders noted that valuable information is often missed because it is 'lost' within the expanse of practice guidance – because practitioners do not know the information exists, or where to look to find it. This issue has been taken into account in the formulation of Review recommendations. For example, where stakeholder feedback was that MARAM contained certain gaps, the Review considered whether this feedback indicated the need for additional content in MARAM, or alternatively, whether the accessibility of existing content needed to be enhanced.

FINDINGS

While not intended to be used in this way, the Review has found that MARAM Risk Assessment tools and Safety Plans are often being used in a tick-box fashion, which is not being guided by the MARAM practice guidance. This has acted as a barrier to taking a conversational/narrative approach to risk assessment and management outlined in the practice guidance. The Review also found that safety planning does not always acknowledge victim survivor agency, as it tends to revolve around victim survivors wanting to leave. This approach does not adequately account for victim survivors who may choose to remain in the relationship or at home, or who may not want to be in contact with the police. Moreover, given that risk assessment and management is a dynamic, ongoing process, it was highlighted that MARAM tools should be designed in a way which enable assessments to be easily updated and built upon. The Review understands that this capacity has been incorporated in online tool platforms, including TRAM.

Risk factors and presentations of risk

Whilst MARAM addresses many presentations of family violence risk factors, the Review has found that it could be expanded to more fully address other ways in which family violence presents, such as substance use coercion and technology-facilitated abuse. These presentations should be considered in revisions to the evidence-based risk factors. Recent research also highlights new manifestations or ways of perpetrating violence used during the COVID-19 pandemic. Other research highlights the occurrence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in children impacted by family violence. While MARAM contains extensive guidance on violence and trauma informed practice, it contains only a limited discussion of PTSD specifically. Consideration may be given to specifically addressing the occurrence and response to PTSD in both adult and children victim survivors in MARAM resources.

FINDINGS

There is scope for updating MARAM evidence-based risk factors based on recent evidence, as well as more adequately capturing the current status and nature of dynamic risk. Recent evidence confirms several serious risk factors associated with a victim being killed or almost killed that are consistent with risk factors represented in MARAM. These include actual or pending separation, intimate partner sexual violence, non-fatal strangulation or choking, stalking, and access to and/or recent use of weapons by an adult who uses violence. Further, the Review has found that MARAM falls short in terms of risk assessment and safety planning where a victim survivor is anticipating an adult who uses violence being released from jail.

The representation in MARAM of the risk posed by a history of family violence, threats to harm a victim survivor, and mental illness of an adult using violence, may be updated, given the recent evidence relating to these risk factors. Further, there is evidence that social isolation, which was exacerbated in the context of COVID-19, is associated with an increase in the frequency and severity of family violence, and such experiences could be emphasised more strongly in MARAM. There is also some limited emerging evidence relating to arson (and burning-related threats) as a risk factor, or new presentation of existing risk factors, which is not specifically addressed in MARAM.

FINDINGS

Intersectionality and diversity

The literature indicates that empirically identified risk factors included in family violence risk assessment tools and frameworks are almost exclusively developed based on an analysis of intimate partner heterosexual relationships. There is a growing body of evidence indicating that particular groups and individuals experience discrimination and marginalisation, as well as specific family violence behaviours targeting identity or effect of marginalisation that increase the probability, impact and/or severity of family violence. These groups include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; migrants, refugees and people who are culturally and linguistically diverse; people with disability; LGBTIQA+ individuals; people with a mental illness; older people; women in pregnancy and early motherhood; people in regional, rural and remote areas; and young women. Based on the literature reviewed, this Review has found that there is currently a lack of risk assessment tools that adequately address the diverse and intersecting needs of these groups. However, the literature suggests that caution must be taken in amending risk assessment instruments. Tailoring an instrument to the needs of a particular group in the absence of underpinning evidence may impact its reliability and inadvertently disservice the very groups it aims to assist. The tailoring of instruments may also undermine the goal of achieving a common language and understanding of family violence risk.

FINDINGS

Children as victim survivors in their own right

MARAM is effective in communicating the need to consider each child as victim survivors in their own right but many practitioners are, for a number of reasons, reluctant to engage with children directly. This may be because time pressure and caseload may mean they prioritise their efforts towards adults, there is little opportunity to engage directly with the child, they feel they lack the specialist expertise they think is needed, they are worried about harming the child or placing the child at further risk (particularly where child victim survivors remain in contact with the adult using violence), or they think it is outside their role or not supported by organisational policies and practices. The Review has found a need for further research on risk assessment and management in relation to children as victim survivors in their own right across all communities and identities.[1]

[1] These findings should be considered in development of the new child and young person-focused MARAM Practice Guides and assessment tools being developed by FSV.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Review has made 17 recommendations to ensure that MARAM remains consistent with best practices of family violence risk assessment and risk management. These recommendations are outlined below.

01

Update MARAM's conceptualisation of family violence and presentations of risk across communities in the MARAM Framework policy document, practice guidance and tools, in line with new evidence

This includes:

- considering a revision of terminology to support a trauma-informed approach. This may include revision of the terms 'victim survivor', 'perpetrator', and 'adolescent using violence'
- ensuring that children and young people's experience of family violence, across all identities and communities, is adequately reflected in MARAM
- ensuring MARAM reflects emerging trends of presentations of coercive control, such as substance use coercion and technology-facilitated abuse
- incorporating the way that family violence may manifest in a public health emergency or natural disaster situation
- noting the potential link between financial abuse and dementia
- consideration of questions in MARAM tools on forced marriage and shame killings (including the intersections of gender, poverty, sexuality, and immigration policies) as well as more information in relation to these concepts in the practice guidance
- considering providing further practice guidance (or questions in MARAM tools) in relation to matters such as:
  - 'personal disasters' including gambling loss or points of escalation in relation to sports and gaming
  - core principles of technological safety planning (including by providing guidance on how children's devices are often targeted for technology-facilitated abuse, and expanding questions about controlling and tracking behaviours in relation to location and technology)
  - clear examples of verbal abuse, insults, manipulation, and/or gaslighting in the questions relating to emotional and psychological abuse.

RECOMMENDATIONS

02

Retain Structured Professional Judgment (SPJ) and ensure that any amendments to existing risk assessment instruments to embed cultural appropriateness do not diminish the reliability of the instruments or undermine the goal of achieving a common language and understanding of family violence risk

03

Expand existing practice guidance to address gaps in determining how and when to assess risk

This includes expanding (or highlighting existing) guidance on:

- how to articulate the rationale (as required in MARAM Risk Assessment tools) for the determination of risk level
- what 'risk' looks like in different contexts
- how practitioners should synthesise different pieces of information to determine the level of risk
- when it is safe, reasonable, and appropriate to undertake a risk assessment, and when it is not safe to do so.

04

Revise MARAM Safety Planning tools and guidance on risk management to more explicitly support victim survivor agency

This includes:

- ensuring the Safety Planning tools:
  - provide a stronger focus on building on what a victim survivor is already doing to keep themselves safe
  - more explicitly account for those who may not be ready to leave the relationship, those for whom family violence is not within the intimate partner context, or those who wish to remain within the home/community
- ensuring practice guidance articulates effective ways to navigate safety planning where the victim survivor remains in contact with the adult using violence, recognising that forms of contact may vary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

05

Establish a clearer link within the practice guidance between risk assessment and risk management, including how risk assessment informs safety planning

This includes:

- elaborating on MARAM's existing guidance to support practitioners to explore alternatives when a victim survivor does not feel safe to engage with the police
- elaborating on risk assessment and safety planning for when an adult using violence is released from prison or custody.

06

More effectively capture dynamic risk, timelines of family violence, tactics and patterns of behaviour used to maintain coercive control in MARAM guidance and tools

This includes actions such as:

- clarifying how the definitions of recency and frequency (terms currently used in MARAM Risk Assessment tools) pertain to specific risk factors, understanding of the pattern of coercive control, and relationship to risk level
- providing guidance about when to perform reviews and check-ins to gauge how risk may have changed over time or in relation to changes in circumstances, how this should be reflected in ongoing risk management and whether this differs between sectors or services
- enabling assessments to be more easily built upon to improve the link between a victim survivor's risk assessments and more effectively articulate the dynamic nature of risk and changes over time
- incorporating a subsection containing more specific questions that explore how adults using violence may use dynamics with children; undermine the parent-child relationship; and/or use domestic servitude, economic abuse, and isolation as forms of coercive control.

RECOMMENDATIONS

07

Expand the discussion of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and acquired brain injury (ABI) in MARAM practice guidance and improve the visibility and accessibility of this guidance

This includes:

- providing information on the occurrence of PTSD in children (including in materials relating to children currently in development)
- strengthening guidance on the unique impacts of trauma for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people experiencing family violence, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people
- enhancing the visibility and accessibility of the cognitive impairment and ABI guidance within MARAM Practice Guides in accordance with recommendation 12.

08

Support system-wide consistent practice and alignment by enhancing and elevating aspects of the existing guidance in relation to a shared understanding of family violence (Pillar 1)

This includes actions such as:

- strengthening sector specific guidance on how organisations should determine applicability of MARAM responsibilities and explore opportunities for making guidance more accessible
- providing a description of the connection between different levels of MARAM responsibilities, applicable tools, and practice guidance more explicitly. This should include a simplified, easily accessed visual representation of workforce responsibilities linked to levels of MARAM responsibilities
- continuing to consult with a broad range of sectors and communities to ensure that MARAM reflects experiences and learnings from different sectors and communities
- ensuring the language about workforce responsibilities used in organisational MARAM resources and practice guidance is consistent, and that the relationship between various resources is clear.

RECOMMENDATIONS

09

Strengthen guidance on consistent and collaborative practice (Pillar 2), including how collaboration is translated into practice

This includes:

- providing more guidance on what best practice, client-centred collaborative practice looks like (including resources demonstrating its practical application), such as through the provision of case studies
- providing specific guidance to workforces to help them better understand their roles and responsibilities to improve the ability to reciprocally communicate what they do with other workforces
- ensuring the MARAM Framework policy document reflects the complexity of interagency family violence work to support the development of responsive practice
- elevating the guidance on secondary consultation, including:
  - when it may be appropriate and necessary to seek a secondary consultation (this may need to be accompanied by additional prompts in MARAM tools), and articulating roles and responsibilities
  - how to make requests for secondary consultation in ways that improve the experience for victim survivors and manage the resourcing demand on services receiving the request.

RECOMMENDATIONS

10

Provide clarity on the process for organisations to align with MARAM, and scope for making changes to tools to respond to the needs of particular communities

This includes:

- identifying any core aspects of MARAM that should not be departed from in the process of alignment, and clarifying the process for seeking input from FSV when aligning with MARAM (which may include consideration of whether proposed additions constitute new risk factors or new presentations of existing MARAM risk factors, to be added to MARAM practice guidance)
- clarifying the process for sharing enhancements with other sectors that respond to the needs of particular communities in order to:
  - improve the consistency and quality of risk assessment and safety planning for specific communities and client groups
  - enhance system-wide collaboration and shared understanding
  - embed cultural enhancements for use across different sectors
- providing further guidance and illustration of how MARAM can be embedded in organisations and sectors which operate within specific regulatory frameworks, policy environments, or models of working (including therapeutic models).

11

Revise MARAM Practice Guides and tools to support the use of a more narrative-based or conversational approach when undertaking risk assessment and management to support victim survivor agency

This includes actions such as:

- adding explicit guidance at the start of the tools about adopting a conversational approach
- reviewing the use and grouping of questions, the subset questions flowing from them, and the space available for answers and descriptions within MARAM tools
- ensuring Safety Planning tools are flexible with clear links to practice guidance
- providing more guidance for practitioners on how to ask difficult or sensitive questions, such as questions about sexual assault, and supporting the establishment of rapport before these questions are broached.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12

Enhance the usability and accessibility of MARAM

This includes actions such as:

- in consultation with victim survivors and practitioners, creating simple, Easy English versions of key resources, including any victim survivor-facing resources such as the Safety Planning tools and practitioner-facing resources. As per recommendation 16.3, these should be designed and adapted in other languages
- in consultation with victim survivors and practitioners, redesigning the MARAM website to make navigation easier and more intuitive, making it easier for users to find what they are looking for when they need it
- in partnership with service providers, investigating how to enhance the useability of MARAM tools as built into key online platforms and content management systems (such as by investigating the capacity for tools to indicate escalation or de-escalation in frequency, severity, and changes to patterns of behaviour of adults using violence)
- streamlining the Practice Guides by:
  - removing duplication, increasing conciseness, and ensuring Plain English is used
  - delivering information through visual aids such as tables, flowcharts, and diagrams (while ensuring accessibility standards are met)
  - highlighting key tools and learning outcomes to make them easier to find and recall
  - socialising practitioner-focused 'summary chapters'.
- developing resources to bridge the gap between the Practice Guides and the tools. This might include creating action-oriented content on how to apply practice guidance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

13

Update the evidence-based guidance around risk factors and presentations of risk

This includes:

- considering the reframing of 'history of family violence' to perpetrator's pattern of family violence' to emphasise that this risk factor reflects a pattern of behaviour over time
- considering additional MARAM guidance and questions in MARAM tools, including:
  - further guidance in relation to sexual assault
  - emphasising asking the question about sexual assault in all scenarios
  - further prompts when questioning victim survivors about non-fatal strangulation
  - questions which aim to understand what the adult using violence has used as a weapon
  - conversation prompts to support deeper exploration of the full range of behaviours towards pets and animals
  - addressing the nuances in presentation of physical violence towards women while pregnant (for example, violence directed towards specific body parts), by adding further details within the practice guidance and MARAM tools
  - addressing reproductive coercive control in more detail, by including further information and questions within the MARAM tools around reproductive coercion such as refusing to use contraception and forcing to keep or terminate a pregnancy
  - expanding on the various ways in which family violence may present post-partum (beyond physical assault / abuse).
- pending outcomes of the MARAM 5-Year Evidence review – Data Review, considering:
  - recent evidence relating to arson (and burning-related threats) as emerging risk factors or new presentation of existing risk factors
  - whether a history of family violence, threats to harm a victim survivor, and mental illness of the adult using violence should be considered 'serious' risk factors given emerging evidence that these risk factors are associated with a higher risk of lethality / severe harm
  - whether social isolation (particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and other periods of emergency) is associated with a higher risk of lethal outcomes for victim survivors
  - evidence in relation to the increased risk of family violence during pregnancy for specific populations, including women with disability, women aged 18-24 years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, and women with severe mental illness.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14

Improve the descriptions and explanations of the evidence-based risk factors and how these uniquely present for specific populations

This includes:

- incorporating new disability-specific questions in MARAM tools, including the addition of NDIS-related questions
- providing practical information for enquiring about sexual assault where a person has disability.

15

Further assist practitioners to adopt an intersectional approach throughout the entire risk assessment process by utilising the information provided through this Review and working with the relevant communities to implement the recommendations

This includes ensuring that MARAM Framework Principle 3 is embedded in MARAM Practice Guides and tools by:

- providing practical guidance about how structural oppression relates to and impacts family violence risk
- further developing and considering the placement of 'additional considerations' within the Comprehensive Risk Assessment tool, so that intersecting aspects of a person's identity and experiences of structural oppression frame the risk assessment
- reconsidering the framing and language of 'additional considerations' so that they are considered central to the risk assessment
- considering the addition of questions addressing diversity in all Risk Assessment tools.

16

Ensure that MARAM is appropriate and inclusive for people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people with disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse and refugee communities, older people, LGBTIQA+ people, people experiencing mental ill health, and people who have drug or alcohol dependence

RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1

Review and revise MARAM to ensure it is culturally appropriate and safe for people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

This includes working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to ensure MARAM Framework Principle 7 is embedded throughout MARAM by:

- incorporating the healing journey and emphasising the strength of women in MARAM
- providing practical guidance in MARAM on how to effectively support people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities experiencing violence to remain within their family networks and communities
- revising MARAM to encourage a yarning approach, reflect culturally appropriate language, and accommodate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander understandings of community and an individual's place within that community. This may include changes to key terms used and modifications / additions to the SPJ model
- supplementing existing MARAM sections on multiple people using violence through incorporation of discussion of lateral or community violence, and reframing the question: 'is there more than one person making you feel unsafe?'

16.2

Review and revise MARAM to ensure greater applicability to people with disability

This includes ensuring MARAM Framework Principle 8 is embedded in MARAM Practice Guides and tools by working with people with disability and communities working to support them to:

- provide practical guidance about matters such as supporting victim survivors to conduct their own self-assessment of risk
- provide additional information in MARAM practice guidance on how services need to be tailored for victim survivors with an ABI
- provide guidance about language used for defining disability and support needs
- consider how matters outlined in this Review can be included in safety planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16.3 **Review and revise MARAM to ensure it is appropriate and inclusive for people from culturally and linguistically diverse and refugee communities**	**This includes ensuring MARAM Framework Principle 8 is embedded in MARAM Practice Guides and tools by working with culturally and linguistically diverse and refugee communities to:** • provide more practice guidance on forced marriage • include questions about technology in MARAM Risk Assessment tools which prompt the practitioner to consider the control over the victim survivor's access and use of technology, and the use of technology to enact abuse • ensure that culturally appropriate tools are designed and adapted in other languages, including considering whether MARAM terms and concepts can be appropriately translated, rather than relying on interpreters to translate the existing tools • include prompts within MARAM Risk Assessment tools regarding visa sponsorship or other urgent matters relating to visas.
16.4 **Review and revise MARAM to ensure it is appropriate and inclusive for older people**	**This includes ensuring MARAM Framework Principle 8 is embedded in MARAM Practice Guides and tools by working with professionals supporting older people experiencing family violence to ensure:** • practice requirements for risk assessment and management are appropriate and inclusive • appropriate prompts and questions are included in MARAM Risk Assessment tools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16.5 **Review and revise MARAM to ensure it is appropriate and inclusive for LGBTIQA+ people**	**This includes ensuring MARAM Framework Principle 8 is embedded in MARAM Practice Guides and tools by working in collaboration with LGBTIQA+ people to:** • reconsider the order of 'additional considerations' as noted in recommendation 15 • consider the placement of information relevant to LGBTIQA+ people within the Practice Guides and tools • consider the accessibility of information relating to LGBTIQA+ people throughout MARAM resources to ensure it can be easily located, as per recommendation 12.
16.6 **Review and revise MARAM to ensure it is appropriate and inclusive for people experiencing mental ill health**	**This includes ensuring MARAM Framework Principle 8 is embedded in MARAM practice guidance and tools by working with those experiencing mental ill health and services supporting them to:** • provide additional guidance on how a person's mental health affects their experience of family violence or how family violence impacts them differently • provide additional guidance on matters such as how adults using violence may use a victim survivor's mental health as part of the tactics of control • consider including 'additional considerations' in the Risk Assessment tools relating to victim survivor mental health • reconsider the order of 'additional considerations' as per recommendation 15.

RECOMMENDATIONS

16.7

Review and revise MARAM to ensure it is appropriate and inclusive for people who have drug or alcohol dependence

This includes ensuring MARAM Framework Principle 8 is embedded in MARAM practice guidance and tools, by working with those who have drug or alcohol dependence, and services supporting them, to:

- include 'additional considerations' in the Risk Assessment tools relating to victim survivor alcohol and drug use
- ensure terminology is appropriate and inclusive
- provide additional practice guidance on matters such as why people use substances and how to work with those who do; substance use coercion; and how adults using violence may weaponise substance use as part of the tactics of control
- reconsider the order of 'additional considerations' as per recommendation 15.

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Ensure that MARAM practice guidance and tools relating to children and materials currently in development support child-centred practice

This includes:

- providing further guidance about when it is appropriate, and how to, engage directly with children, with reference to age and stage of development of the child and disability (if present)
- providing further guidance about how to approach difficult subject matter such as sexual abuse
- providing further guidance relating to children and young people who use violence
- providing opportunities for MARAM to further draw on aspects of the Safe and Together model that have been highlighted by stakeholders as helpful, in making any amendments to MARAM guidance relating to children.