

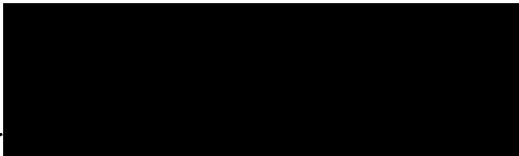
**IN THE MATTER OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION  
INTO FAMILY VIOLENCE**

**ATTACHMENT AR-5 TO STATEMENT OF ANDREW REAPER**

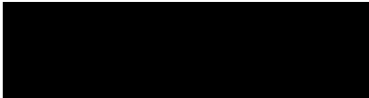
Date of document: 17 July 2015  
Filed on behalf of: the Applicant  
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This is the attachment marked '**AR-5**' produced and shown to **ANDREW REAPER** at the time of signing his Statement on 17 July 2015.



Before me: .....



**An Australian Legal Practitioner within  
the meaning of the Legal Profession Uniform Law (Victoria)**

Attachment AR-5

# Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA)

## 1 Introduction

On 22 February 2015, the Honourable Alex Chernov, Governor of Victoria, announced the commencement of a Royal Commission to inquire into and report on Victoria's response to family violence. The Royal Commission's consideration and review of Corrections Victoria's response to family violence includes a focus on the means by which identified perpetrators of family violence within the Victorian Correctional system are identified, assessed and directed to relevant interventions to maximise opportunities for behaviour change. Central to this process is Corrections Victoria's application of the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA) psychometric tool to identify risk of family violence and inform recommendation of programmatic interventions to be completed throughout a custodial and/or community-based sentence.

This paper provides an overview of the SARA psychometric tool, background and context of Correction's Victoria's application of this tool and overview of the placement of SARA within Corrections Victoria's Offending Behaviour Programs Service Delivery Model.

## 2 Document purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of CV's application of the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA) psychometric tool – the risk assessment measure that forms part of the clinical screening process for identified family violence perpetrators within the Offending Behaviour Programs Service Delivery Model - to identify the risk of intimate partner assault and inform intervention recommendations.

In outlining CV's use of the SARA tool, this document details one component of CV's Family Violence service delivery model– though is not designed as a stand-alone document on CV's overall family violence response. This document is designed to supplement data provided to the Royal Commission into Family Violence around CV's identification of family violence perpetrators, family violence service delivery model and program effort and broader Offending Behaviour Program Service Delivery Model.

## 3 Background

Corrections Victoria's Offending Behaviour Programs target offence specific and offence related factors influencing offending behaviour and engages offenders towards achieving positive behaviour change. The Offending Behaviour Program Service Delivery Model (SDM) is a statewide service across prisons and community corrections. The SDM aims to reduce the risk of reoffending and maximise community safety through the provision of an evidence-based, responsive and integrated suite of programs that balances the interface between best practice and operational service demands. Recent correctional reforms have positioned OBP Service Delivery as a central part of CV's rehabilitative effort as well as a key source of information and advice regarding case management practices and Parole decision making.

The SDM is based on a pathways approach to service delivery such that differentiated service responses are provided based on offending and risk profiles. Two service pathways are available within the Model; the Serious Violent Offender (SVO) Pathway and the General Offender (GO) Pathway. Targeted offending behaviour programs ensure that screenings, assessments and interventions are appropriately targeted to meet the specific risk and intervention needs of these cohorts. The pathways approach to service delivery promotes flexibility in the service model by providing capacity for individuals' to move between the SVO and GO service pathways in doing so maximise opportunities for a more targeted and responsive approach to their specific risk and interventions needs.

The OBP Screening is the preparation phase of an assessment, whereby relevant information is obtained during a file review and where applicable clinical interview and psychometric administration to inform the broader assessment. The OBP assessment process utilises relevant psychometric tools to assist OBP clinicians to determine evidence-based assessment of recidivism risk to (a) understand their potential for engaging in offending (general and/or violent) in the future and (b) determine what should be done to prevent this offending from occurring. It is during the assessment process that the SARA tool is utilised to help determine risk of spousal assault in offenders who have been convicted of family violent related offences.

### 3.1 Corrections Victoria's Use of the SARA

In June 2011, OBP conducted a Family Violence literature review and recommendations paper. One of the outcomes of this review was that OBP implement the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA) tool "as a robust assessment schedule and case formulation aid for family violence offenders". Since 2011, OBP has incorporated the use of the SARA tool within the OBP Service Delivery Model, specifically targeting the assessment and management of Family Violence Offenders.

The SARA presents a framework within which to assess the risk of future violence in people arrested for spousal assault. More specifically, it was developed in Canada and consists of 20 static and dynamic risk factors, which are designed to assist in the prediction of both intimate partner violence and lethality (Braff & Sneddon, 2007; Guo & Hartall, 2008; Helmus & Bourgon, 2011).

#### 3.1.1 Strengths of the SARA

The recommendation to implement the SARA within the OBP service delivery model was based on a number of strengths that the tool exhibits. These strengths are detailed below:

- The SARA is the most common risk tool for Family Violence Offenders
- It is used in at least 15 countries and has been translated into 10 languages
- Unlike other intimate partner violence risk tools, the SARA allows for treatment planning, intervention strategies and levels of supervision (Braff and Sneddon 2007). A comprehensive case formulation of family violence offenders is available to Clinicians and as a result, the tool has an emphasis upon risk management strategies.
- It includes a variety of static and dynamic factors related to both general violence and intimate partner violence, which makes it flexible, sensitive to offender change, and useful for treatment planning (Helmus and Bourgon 2011)
- The SARA is based upon 20 risk factors that have been clinically and empirically identified as those most predictive of spousal abuse.
- The SARA predicts re-offending in diverse samples, including offenders released from prison, offenders on community supervision and mentally disordered offenders.
- Because the SARA includes a structured clinical approach, it is recommended that mental health professionals conduct the assessments. This allows for a more robust assessment compared to those tools that target completion by other professionals.
- It has been shown to have good validity and inter-rater reliability (Helmus and Bourgon 2011, Kropp 2008). These validation studies have been conducted by individuals that are independent from the developers and with different types of adult male offenders (e.g. offenders in prison and on community orders).
- The SARA utilises simple forms and focuses on information which is routinely collected during forensic assessments, minimising additional workload. The aim of the SARA is to be systematic and comprehensive, yet it does not require assessments of inordinate length and complexity.

### 3.1.2 Limitations of the SARA

Although the SARA has a significant number of strengths, it must be acknowledged that, like all psychometric tools, there are a number of limitations. These limitations are detailed below:

- The SARA has not been tested with Female offenders or Juvenile offenders
- Although the sample included some non-Caucasian offenders, it is not clear how well the SARA works with minority offenders
- The sample was limited to only female victims of Family violence and therefore the SARA is restricted to identifying the risk of violence towards a partner and the perpetrator must be a male. As such, any risk of family violence involving other family members as victims or a female as the perpetrator will need to be assessed utilising standard violence risk assessment tools such as the VRS or HCR-20.

## 4 Technical use of SARA tool

The SARA was developed in Canada at the British Columbia Institute on Family Violence and is used in 15 countries around the world (Braff and Sneddon 2007; Helmus and Bourgon 2011). The SARA is designed to predict both intimate partner violence and lethality (Guo and Hartall 2008).

The SARA consists of 20 static and dynamic risk factors, which focus on criminal history, psychological adjustment, spousal assault history and information on the index offence. The table below reflects the 20 SARA risk factors, in each four main areas:

Criminal History		Spousal Assault history	
1	Past assault of family members	11	Past physical assault
2	Past assault of strangers or acquaintances	12	Past sexual assault/sexual jealousy
3	Past violation of conditional release or community supervision	13	Past use of weapons and/or credible threats of death
<b>Psychosocial Adjustment</b>		14	Recent escalation in frequency or severity of assault
4	Recent relationship problems	15	Past violations of no contact orders
5	Recent employment problems	16	Extreme minimization or denial of spousal assault history
6	Victim of and/or witness to family violence as a child or adolescent	17	Attitudes that support or condone spousal assault
7	Recent substance abuse/dependence	<b>Index offence</b>	
8	Recent suicidal or homicidal ideation/intent	18	Severe and/or sexual assault
9	Recent psychotic and/or manic symptoms	19	Use of weapons and/or credible threats of death
10	Personality disorder with anger, impulsivity or behavioural instability	20	Violation of no contact order

The SARA is an interview-based, paper-and-pencil checklist designed to screen for risk factors of spousal assault. The SARA assessment procedure includes:

- semi structured interviews with the accused and the victim (where possible and appropriate)
- review of collateral records, including police reports, victim statements, and criminal records

- other psychological assessments as required or as available

SARA assessments are concerned with the extent to which there is evidence that each risk factor is present, and the extent to which each is relevant to the individual's risk of future violence in intimate relationships. The SARA also emphasises risk management and the development of a Management Plan addressing each risk factor is critical to the use of the SARA.

## 5 OBPB Application of SARA

The Family Violence Model within Corrections Victoria recognises the importance of front-end identification of Family Violence offenders.

### 5.1.1 Who receives the SARA?

During OBP's intake and screening process, both General and Serious Violent Offenders are screened for family violence related offending. Those that are eligible for OBP services and are identified as having a family violence offence must have a SARA administered by an OBP Clinician as part of their OBP Pathway assessment.

### 5.1.2 Program eligibility:

Offenders found to be Moderate or High Risk of Spousal assault utilising the SARA will likely be recommended to participate in the Changeabout Program (Family Violence specific program). It must be noted that treatment recommendations are based on a number of factors and not solely on risk assessment outcomes.

Offenders found to be Low Risk of Spousal assault utilising the SARA will be recommended to participate in a Men's Behaviour Change Program.

For those offenders that also display treatment needs in relation to general violent behaviour, additional treatment recommendations such as the Violence Intervention Program can be made in conjunction with Family Violence specific treatment (Changeabout).

### 5.1.3 Who administers the SARA?

All OBP Clinicians are qualified to administer the SARA tool. OBP regularly offers training on the administration of the SARA tool to maintain quality assurance and professional development of OBP staff.

## 6 Summary

Since the introduction of the SARA in 2011, over 100 OBP Clinicians have been trained in the administration of this tool. More recently, in June 2015, Corrections Victoria secured the services of Dr. Michael Davis and Professor James Ogloff (both leading experts in the field of Forensic Psychology), to provide SARA training to OBP Clinicians. Feedback from Dr. Michael Davis and Professor James Ogloff during this training indicated that the SARA remains their tool of choice when assessing spousal risk of violence.

## Document details

Criteria	Details
TRIM ID:	CD/15/286333
Document title:	Spousal Assault Risk Assessment (SARA)
Document owner:	Offending Behaviour Programs Branch

## Version control

Version	Date	Description	Author
V0.1	23 06 15	First draft	Melanie Else

## Document approval

This document requires the following approval:

Name	Title	Organisation
Shaymaa Elkadi	General Manager	