



Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence

Introduction

- 1 The County Court of Victoria (**the County Court**) welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence (**the Commission**). Reducing and preventing family violence is an important priority for all sectors of society and the County Court has an important role to play in addressing family violence.
- 2 This submission is informed by the unique expertise of the Judges of the County Court and primarily responds to the second item of the Commission's terms of reference - *to investigate the means of having systemic responses to family violence, particularly in the legal system*. The submission concentrates on highlighting key issues and providing suggestions as to how current processes, procedures and systems within the County Court could be improved in order to enhance systemic responses to family violence. In particular, this submission highlights the practical steps that can be taken to better protect the safety of victims engaged in County Court proceedings. The focus on victim safety recognises the therapeutic role of the justice system and is based on the understanding that the court experience can significantly impact on victims.
- 3 In drafting this submission the County Court has examined and reflected upon its current systems and practices in order to identify the change that is required to create better outcomes and efficiencies. Implementation of the proposed changes will require an investment of time and additional resources.
- 4 The key issues considered by this submission are:
 - Court processes and procedures to ensure safety of victims;
 - Data collection and recording of family violence matters before the Court;
 - Judicial education and professional development;
 - Staff training and education across the legal profession; and
 - Legislation and other matters.
- 5 The County Court is the principal trial court in Victoria. In 2013-14 the County Court finalised 11,869 cases, including 6,447 civil cases and 5,422 criminal cases. Included within those criminal

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cases are Family Violence Intervention Order (IVO) appeals from the Magistrates' Court.¹ In 2013-14 the County Court heard 66 such appeals. Between July 2014 and May 2015, the County Court had heard 124 such appeals.²

- 6 In addition, the County Court regularly hears family violence matters in the Criminal Division. For example, in relation to charges such as intentionally causing serious injury, assault, stalking or kidnapping between intimate partners. Family violence is often inextricably intertwined in criminal proceedings and it is common for charges of aggravated burglary and/or assault to appear alongside breaches of IVOs. County Court Judges see these family violence cases regularly.
- 7 This submission is informed by discussions held with judicial officers, court networkers and Registry staff from across the County Court, all of whom regularly work in the area of family violence. The County Court is well placed to comment on the key issues, the subject of this submission.
- 8 When family violence matters come before the County Court, circumstances have reached a crisis point. Within that context, this submission provides practical suggestions for how to improve processes, procedures and systems to manage risk, create safer court environments and contribute to enhanced systemic responses to family violence. This submission does not examine or make recommendations regarding matters of policy, which are ultimately decisions of Government.
- 9 The County Court is committed to being proactive and providing leadership to address and respond to family violence. In addition, Judges will continue to demonstrate leadership in this area through the sentencing process and the identification of general deterrence as a sentencing factor. The importance of such deterrence has been highlighted by the Court of Appeal:

General deterrence is of fundamental importance in cases of domestic violence. The victims of such violence are often so enveloped by fear that they are incapable of escaping the violence or reporting it to the authorities. The key to protection lies in deterring the violent conduct by sending an unequivocal message to would-be perpetrators of domestic violence that if they offend, they will be sentenced to a lengthy period of imprisonment so that they are no longer in a position to inflict harm.³

¹ Both the respondent (offender) and applicant (victim) have a right of appeal to the County Court against any decision of a Magistrate, including in relation to conditions of the IVO.

² The County Court records and captures information relating to all cases on its Case List Management System (CLMS). However, the County Court does not accurately capture and record all relevant information related to IVO matters or family violence related proceedings.

³ *Pasinis v The Queen* [2014] VSCA 97 [57]

- 10 However, prison sentences can only have maximum deterrent effect if they are publicised across the community, particularly amongst those at risk of offending.⁴ It is the role and responsibility of Government to communicate the deterrence message, which is provided through court sentencing. As the Court of Appeal has stated:

*... it is the responsibility of government to ensure public safety. And Government must therefore take responsibility for communicating the deterrent message to those who need to hear it.*⁵

*...the publication of sentencing reasons can never be enough, by itself, to send 'the message' on which the theory of general deterrence rests. That requires the kind of sustained communication campaign which has been so successfully conducted by the Transport Accident Commission, in relation to death and injury caused by speed and alcohol and drugs.*⁶

- 11 The legal system has a very important role to play in addressing family violence, but it is part of a broader community-wide response. In this regard, the County Court highlights the need for primary prevention and early intervention strategies as essential components of any such response to reduce and prevent family violence.

Improving Court processes and procedures to ensure that we appropriately safeguard victims

- 12 Attending court can be an intimidating and stressful experience for anyone. For victims, it can be particularly traumatic. For victims of family violence, attending court for an IVO appeal hearing can also be a high risk situation where they may find themselves face-to-face with the offender.
- 13 The County Court has identified the following three key areas for improvement to provide a safer and more secure environment for victims:
- 13.1 *Identifying high risk cases and managing risk through improved case management and/or information sharing across jurisdictions;*
- 13.2 *Safety and access to support services for victims in court; and*
- 13.3 *Linkages between the legal system and early intervention strategies.*

⁴ *DPP v Russell* [2014] VSCA 308. See also: Supreme Court of Victoria, *Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence* (May 2015).

⁵ *Ibid* [6].

⁶ *Ibid* [71]. As the Supreme Court of Victoria noted in its submission to the Commission, while those statements were made by the Court of Appeal in the context of alcohol fuelled street violence, as general statements about the operation of general deterrence they are equally applicable in the context of family violence.

14 These three areas are considered below.

15 *Identifying high risk cases and managing risk through improved case management and/or information sharing across jurisdictions*

15.1 The Magistrates' Court currently identifies and flags all matters involving allegations of family violence, whether it is in the summary or committal stream. For example, Victoria Police records on the charge sheet whether a matter is family violence related and this information is transferred to the Magistrates' Court case management system (Courtlink).⁷ The Magistrates' Court has reliable processes and mechanisms for the capture of relevant information on Courtlink.⁸

15.2 At present, the County Court does not have a process for identifying or flagging matters involving family violence. Information collected by the Magistrates' Court is not conveyed to the County Court upon committal for trial or plea, or upon lodgement of an appeal notice. This should be rectified. Relevant information should be shared between the County and Magistrates' Court in relation to family violence matters. This may require the review and/or development of processes and procedures in the County Court to identify and flag family violence matters on CLMS and the court/electronic file. For example, the County Court Registry could request the information when the matter comes over from the Magistrates' Court on committal, appeal or plea.

15.3 Identifying and flagging all family violence matters would assist with management of listings. For example, it would provide the List Judge with the relevant information to give these matters priority as appropriate.

15.4 Importantly, if a proceeding has a family violence flag attached (whether an IVO appeal or criminal assault) it should provide a trigger for identifying and assessing danger or risk to victims.⁹ At present, there is no such risk assessment process within the County Court.

15.5 While the Office of Police Prosecutions (**OPP**) has primary responsibility for witness support, and provides an excellent service through the Witness Assistance Service, the Court also has a role to play in safeguarding victims and ensuring procedural justice. Development of a framework within the County Court for identifying family violence proceedings and managing risk would improve safety and security for victims. This might also require improved information sharing between jurisdictions and/or agencies. For

⁷ Similarly, there is a family violence checkbox that is recorded on the Filing Hearing Information sheet provided to the Magistrates' Court by the Office of Police Prosecutions at Filing Hearing for all indictable matters.

⁸ For further details, please refer to the Magistrates' Court submission to the Commission, in particular the section relating to '*Improvements to assist in better identification and management of family violence matters*'.

⁹ It is important that the County Court flags all family violence proceedings, including both IVO appeals from the Magistrates' Court as well as for criminal matters in the general list that involve family violence. For example, kidnapping or assault between intimate partners. Family violence is often inextricably intertwined in criminal matters and it is common for charges of aggravated burglary and/or assault to appear alongside breaches of IVOs.

example, there are layers of risk assessments completed by Victoria Police, the OPP and the Magistrates' Court in relation to family violence matters. These assessments, or parts thereof, could be shared where appropriate.

15.6 The Magistrates' Court adopts the Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework (known as the Common Risk Assessment Framework (**CRAF**)), which is designed to assist professionals and practitioners to identify risk factors associated with family violence and to respond appropriately.¹⁰ The CRAF could be reviewed, and its application adapted, for use as a universal family violence risk assessment tool within Victorian courts, including the County Court.

15.7 Identification of proceedings which involve family violence, and risk factors associated with such matters, would also facilitate improved case management within the County Court as it would provide court staff and Judges with the relevant information in order to make alternative arrangements for hearings and/or to ask questions, as early as possible, regarding:

- Access to witness support;
- The need for additional security;
- Whether interpreters are required;
- If access to legal aid is required (particularly for cross-examination of victim witnesses where the accused is self-represented);
- Linking victims with court networkers and other support services; and
- Whether arrangements need to be made for victims to access remote facilities (e.g. to read a victim impact statement or to view proceedings).

15.8 In many cases, as matters progress, Judges will generally identify and address the above questions. However, it would be more effective if these matters were considered systematically from the outset. The above questions provide an example checklist of issues for consideration in family violence proceedings, which focus on protecting vulnerable complainants and witnesses.

15.9 Early identification of proceedings which involve family violence, risk assessment processes and systems for case management (such as the simple checklist referred to above) are not currently in place in the County court. Implementation of these procedures would provide a

¹⁰ Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria website - <http://www.dvrcv.org.au/training/family-violence-risk-assessment-craf>

structure for the County Court to address issues and risks early and make appropriate arrangements to support victims. The County Court is committed to introducing these types of improvements, however, it will involve considerable change to court systems, processes and procedures and would require ongoing Government funding for investment in resources, infrastructure and facilities.

15.10 Recommendation: *Undertake a comprehensive review of court processes and procedures, including the sharing of information between jurisdictions, with a view to implementing early identification of family violence proceedings, risk assessment processes and systems for case management that would provide a framework to better support victims. This review process should be conducted in respect of the County Court and the whole court system, with a view to ensuring a consistent approach across jurisdictions in relation to flags, risk assessments and case management for family violence matters.*

16 Safety and access to support services for victims in court

- 16.1 IVO appeals are listed in the County Court for pre-appeal mention prior to the appeal dates. These mentions are heard during the 9AM General List. The purpose of these mentions is to ensure that the matter is ready to proceed on the date listed (e.g. the mention considers time allocation for the hearing, witness arrangements, etc). Both sides are required to be present at the mention.
- 16.2 The County Court acknowledges that there are limited processes in place for considering risk or safety of victims prior to and during the pre-appeal mention. Alleged offenders and victims can come face-to-face in these circumstances and if parties are unrepresented there are no legal intermediaries to create separation. These circumstances may cause further trauma for victims and could place them at risk.
- 16.3 The County Court recognises that pre-appeal mention processes and procedures should be reviewed and changes introduced to create a safer environment for victims. For example, changes should be introduced to provide victims with:
- Safe, secure and separate entry and exits to the County Court;
 - Access to remote court facilities for the viewing of or attendance at proceedings;
 - Alternative hearing arrangements so that victims need not appear in person – e.g. Skype, video-link and/or telephone.

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- 16.4 The pre-appeal mention also provides another opportunity to consider the abovementioned checklist, if risk factors have not been considered and/or a case management process has not been undertaken.¹¹
- 16.5 Consideration should be given to reviewing the processes for IVO appeals. Appeal processes can sometimes be used by the alleged offender as a mechanism to further harass and intimidate a victim. In some cases the alleged offender (appellant) lodges an appeal and does not appear at the pre-appeal mention or appeal, but the victim is required to do so. The Commission should explore the option of legislative change to give the court the power to strike out the IVO appeal at the pre-appeal mention where the appellant does not appear. Such processes would need to ensure procedural fairness. For example, if the court was given such a power the pre-appeal mention should be adjourned while the appellant is served with notice that the appeal will be struck out if the appellant fails to attend court for the next mention date.
- 16.6 Following on from the above recommendation, all IVO related pre-appeal mentions should also be flagged on the County Court's CLMS as a family violence matter. The flag/identifier should appear on public listings so that court networkers and other support workers can easily identify family violence proceedings. In addition, security should be informed of high-risk family violence cases and if additional assistance may be required. This would require review and improvements to internal communications and sharing of information within the County Court.
- 16.7 Court networkers provide an integral support service on behalf of the County Court. However, the court network is not integrated into County Court systems (i.e. email) and lacks essential IT infrastructure such as a computer and telephones. These matters should also be addressed in order to facilitate improved internal communications.
- 16.8 The Commission may also wish to consider the option of providing additional support workers based within courts, to assist both victims and offenders. A recent report by the Centre for Innovative Justice, entitled *Opportunities for Early Intervention: Bringing perpetrators of family violence into view (CIJ Report)*, noted that 'the presence of applicant workers or women's services at court is nominated as a vital element in providing victims with support.'¹² Moreover, there is 'resounding support [amongst stakeholders] for the value of respondent workers... who work with men once they attend court and provide a source of unequivocal messages about the unacceptable nature of perpetrators' behaviour.'¹³

¹¹ For example: access to witness support; the need for additional security; whether interpreters are required; if access to legal aid is required; linking victims with court networkers and other support services; and whether arrangements need to be made for victims to access remote facilities for the appeal hearing (e.g. to read a victim impact statement or to view proceedings).

¹² Centre for Innovative Justice, *Opportunities for Early Intervention: Bringing perpetrators of family violence into view* (2015), p. 56.

¹³ Ibid.

16.9 Once again, many of the above suggestions for change would alter current court systems, processes and procedures and will require investment in resources, infrastructure and facilities.

16.10 **Recommendation:** *Review and improve current County Court processes related to IVO appeals, including the provision of alternative attendance arrangements, information sharing, integration of support services and safer access to court facilities for victims. This will require ongoing Government funding and support.*

16.11 **Recommendation:** *Consider and examine options for legislative change to give the court the power to strike out IVO appeals at the pre-appeal mention where the appellant does not appear.*

17 **Linkages between the legal system and early intervention strategies**

17.1 The recent CIJ Report, highlights that while 'the justice system is considered to be a tertiary intervention, many in the field believe that opportunities for earlier interventions should be seized.'¹⁴ The County Court recognises the importance of family violence interventions being protective and preventative, not only punitive. In appropriate cases, offenders may be ordered to engage in early intervention programs such as men's behaviour change programs. However, these programs are oversubscribed and waiting lists are long.

17.2 The Magistrates' Court is funded to purchase places in men's behaviour change programs at sites where it can make counselling orders (i.e. Ballarat, Heidelberg, Frankston and Moorabbin). Current funding allows the Magistrates' Court to purchase up to 340 places per year across those sites. The number of places available for men's behaviour change programs falls well short of demand for the program as a result of the more than 45,000 annual IVO applications finalised in the Magistrates' Court each year.¹⁵ There is an urgent need to significantly increase the number of places available in men's behaviour change programs. In addition, the County Court should be able to link into those men's behaviour change programs and make orders in IVO appeal matters for the placement of offenders in such programs.

17.3 Similarly, access to men's change behaviour programs under Community Corrections Orders can be limited with long waiting lists. Corrections Victoria should be appropriately resourced to increase access to early intervention strategies and do more in the area of family violence.

¹⁴ Centre for Innovative Justice, *Opportunities for Early Intervention: Bringing perpetrators of family violence into view* (2015), p. 32.

¹⁵ *Magistrates' Court of Victoria 2013/14 Annual Report*, p 3. This number excludes interim IVO applications. Altogether the Magistrates' Court heard and finalised 65,737 IVO applications (including interim orders) in 2013-14. These figures reflect a 47% increase in finalised IVO applications since 2008/9.

- 17.4 It is important that Judges can use all the available court and community services available to support prevention and accountability with respect to family violence, including ordering participation in behaviour change programs, where appropriate. To make use of such programs, courts also need to have confidence in service availability, accessibility and quality.
- 17.5 Alongside improved access to men's behaviour change programs, there is an overall need for more integrated service delivery for offenders in order to address multiple and complex needs such as mental health, drug and alcohol issues, accommodation etc. The Courts Integrated Services Program, and similar programs interstate, examine offenders' multiple or complex needs and refer them, where appropriate, to treatment in order to maximise the likelihood that the cycle of offending will be broken.¹⁶ Although this program is not currently available in relation to IVOs, the opportunity to extend the program to offenders charged with family violence related offences warrants consideration.
- 17.6 **Recommendation:** *Increase access to men's behaviour change programs and integrated services across the courts system in relation to IVOs and for offenders charged with family violence related offences. This will require ongoing Government funding and support.*

Improved data collection and recording of family violence matters before the Court

- 18 Current County Court processes and systems do not record when a criminal law proceeding involves family violence. Limited information and data is recorded in relation to IVO appeals. Without this information it is difficult for the County Court to identify, report, plan and manage family violence matters before the court. In addition, poor data means that the court lacks evidence to drive service delivery improvements related to family violence matters.
- 19 Gaps in data capture need to be addressed as a matter of priority for the County Court. However, a significant challenge for the County Court is the improvement of CLMS, which currently restricts the Court's ability to manage risk and support the capture of important information. The process of enhancing CLMS will require significant investment.
- 20 The development of a system for flagging and identifying all matters involving family violence will improve data collection within the County Court. Such data and information would be helpful in terms of understanding the extent of the issues before the court. It would also be useful in terms of managing court practice and procedure. In addition, the data may be of assistance to policy makers, as it can highlight patterns, trends and issues that require reform.
- 21 There should be consistent practices across the whole court system for collecting information and data related to family violence proceedings. This would reduce gaps, result in more reliable

¹⁶ Centre for Innovative Justice, *Opportunities for Early Intervention: Bringing perpetrators of family violence into view* (2015), p. 66.

and quality data, facilitate improved information sharing and enable the consolidation of data to demonstrate patterns, trends and issues across the whole system. In addition, the Commission may wish to consider ways to improve systems for sharing of relevant information between courts in relation to proceedings involving family violence (e.g. to make previous orders and transcripts readily available, where appropriate).

- 22 **Recommendation:** *Review data collection across the court system with a view to developing good quality data management systems for all courts. Establish consistent processes across the court system for capturing data and information related to family violence proceedings. This will require ongoing Government funding and support.*

Judicial education and professional development

- 23 The County Court endorses the submission of the Judicial College of Victoria (JCV). The County Court agrees that judicial education and training in the area of family violence should be cross-jurisdictional and include education on the law as well as training around the nature and dynamics of family violence. In addition, the County Court proposes that training should include the application of risk assessment frameworks to identify the level of risk involved in matters that come before Judges. There is also valuable expertise and knowledge in the Magistrates' Court in relation to family violence matters, which should inform judicial education and training in this area.
- 24 The County Court works in partnership with the JCV to deliver education and training to Judges of the County Court, and will continue to do so to provide tailored and relevant professional development in the area of family violence. The County Court also supports the JCV's proposal for the Family Violence Bench Book to be regularly updated.

Staff training and education across the legal profession

- 25 Educating the profession is equally important as educating judicial officers. Recently the 'Women in Crime' group held a professional development session at the Magistrates Court and invited experienced Magistrates and barristers to speak about their approach to family violence matters. Approximately 70 young practitioners attended the session, which received positive feedback. Young practitioners currently practising in the area of family violence indicated that the training had given them a new perspective on family violence issues and that they intended to change their approach to such matters.
- 26 Since 2008, when the *Family Violence Protection Act 2008* was introduced, Victoria Police has substantially changed its practice and culture in respect of family violence. This has improved protection for victims, reflected in the increasing numbers of IVO applications finalised.¹⁷ Following this example, cultural change should be a priority within the courts, the OPP and at the

¹⁷ *Magistrates' Court of Victoria 2013/14 Annual Report*, p 90.

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Bar to ensure that responses to family violence are appropriate and victims are protected. Improved education and training across the legal profession will help to build such cultural change. The County Court will work in collaboration with the legal profession to achieve this goal.

- 27 Family violence is a challenging and confronting issue in the community. It is important that all court staff are supported through learning and development opportunities so that they understand and feel confident when dealing with and responding to family violence matters.
- 28 Front of house staff in the County Court, such as security, tipstaves and Registry staff, are often the first point of contact at the court for victims of family violence. It is therefore essential that education and training is provided to County Court staff to raise awareness of family violence issues and dynamics, as well as victim's experiences with the legal system and how to approach people in such circumstances. Some court staff, such as court networkers, may require specific training in relation to trauma informed care and practice. Trauma informed care and practice is grounded in an understanding of the multiple effects of trauma and interpersonal violence. It involves changing assumptions about how we provide services and creating organisational cultures that are personal, holistic, creative, open and therapeutic.¹⁸ If staff are aware of and understand these matters they will be better equipped to respond to and support victims of family violence.
- 29 Family violence training and education for staff should be implemented across whole court system. However, this training and education may need to be tailored to each court, in order to be integrated and aligned with the relevant court systems, processes and procedures. This will require ongoing Government funding and support.

Legislation and other matters

- 30 This submission has highlighted ways in which the County Court can improve processes to ensure that victims are provided with opportunities, in all family violence matters, to give evidence or view proceedings from remote facilities. However, the Commission may wish to consider whether legislation should be introduced to enable victims of family violence to deliver evidence in chief by video recording (similar to video and audio recorded evidence (**VARE**), which is accessible under the *Criminal Procedure Act 2009* in respect of legal proceedings, other than a committal proceeding, that relates to a charge for a sexual offence or an indictable offence involving assault). New South Wales recently introduced legislation to enable victims of family violence to provide video recorded evidence.¹⁹
- 31 The Commission may also wish to consider the impact of Victoria Legal Aid's (**VLA**) eligibility requirements in relation to family law assistance for family violence offenders. At present, VLA

¹⁸ *Mental Health Coordinating Council* website – www.mhcc.org.au

¹⁹ Troy Grant MP, Pru Goward MP and Gabrielle Upton MP, Media Release, *Police Courts to Ease Domestic Violence Trauma*, 31 May 2015.

eligibility guidelines state that a person is ineligible for family law assistance if they have breached an IVO in the preceding 12 months.

- 32 In a recent case before the County Court, a self-represented offender was unable to access family law assistance in relation to a separate proceeding because he had recently breached an IVO. In this case, it was apparent that an underlying issue giving rise to the offending was the offender's lack of access to his children. Given admissions about the origins and the cause of offending in this matter, it was clear that addressing the family law issue might go some way towards ameliorating the risk that the offender posed to his former partner and to the community. In these circumstances, it would serve the County Court's overall objective, which is directed towards rehabilitating the offender and protecting the community from any future offending, for the offender to be able to access family law assistance.
- 33 This matter reflects the importance of establishing more integrated court processes for family violence proceedings,²⁰ and reveals the punitive impact of the VLA guideline. The County Court understands that VLA is currently reviewing this guideline. That review process should consider the interrelated nature of family law and family violence matters and the need for the legal system to develop a more holistic, integrated and preventative based approach to addressing family violence matters.
- 34 A number of suggestions in this submission have focussed on changing security systems, providing safe entry and exit to courts for victims and access to remote witness facilities. These logistical proposals can be accommodated in the Melbourne County Court. However, there is a significant difference between the Melbourne County Court and regional courts where there are shared entrances and, in some instances, shared bathrooms. In this regard, the County Court suggests that there should be an audit and/or review of all country courts, with a view to improving court safety and security.

Conclusion

- 35 Family violence is a 'wicked problem'²¹ and in order to effectively address and prevent family violence it will require the concerted effort and collaboration of all sectors. The County Court strongly supports the work of the Commission and is committed to contributing to the reduction and prevention of family violence. In particular, the County Court has a key role to play in improving systemic responses to family violence in the legal system. This submission has highlighted various procedural and practical steps that the County Court can introduce to improve its practice, processes and procedures to more appropriately respond to family violence.

²⁰ The need for more integrated court processes is examined in more detail in submissions provided to the Commission by other legal organisations and representatives – e.g. see the recommendations of the Family Violence Taskforce and the Law Institute of Victoria.

²¹ A 'wicked problem' is a complex policy problem that has multiple causes and often requires changing people's behaviour and addressing social divides. There is no definitive solution or quick fix and responses require reassessment of traditional ways of working and solving problems. For further information refer to: Lynelle Briggs, *Tackling wicked problems: A public policy perspective*, Australian Public Service Commissioner (2007).

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However, changes to systems, services, infrastructure and facilities will require ongoing Government funding and investment.

Recommendations

- 36 **Recommendation 1:** Undertake a comprehensive review of court processes and procedures, including the sharing of information between jurisdictions, with a view to implementing early identification of family violence proceedings, risk assessment processes and systems for case management that would provide a framework to better support victims. This review process should be conducted in respect of the County Court and the whole court system, with a view to ensuring a consistent approach across jurisdictions in relation to flags, risk assessments and case management for family violence matters.
- 37 **Recommendation 2:** Review and improve current County Court processes related to IVO appeals, including the provision of alternative attendance arrangements, information sharing, integration of support services and safer access to court facilities for victims
- 38 **Recommendation 3:** Increase access to men's behaviour change programs and integrated services across the courts system in relation to IVOs and for offenders charged with family violence related offences.
- 39 **Recommendation 4:** Consider and examine options for legislative change to give the court the power to strike out IVO appeals at the pre-appeal mention where the appellant does not appear.
- 40 **Recommendation 5:** Review data collection across the court system with a view to developing good quality data management systems for all courts. Establish consistent processes across the court system for capturing data and information related to family violence proceedings.



Acting Chief Judge McInerney
County Court of Victoria

For further information or to discuss this submission with the County Court, please contact: Amy Barry-Macaulay, Manager – Law Reform & Policy, [REDACTED]