



Submission by
Crime Stoppers Victoria

to the
Royal Commission into Family Violence

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Executive Summary

Crime Stoppers Victoria (CSV) recognises that family violence is a significant and ongoing issue affecting the Victorian community, and believes that a cohesive and collaborate whole-of-community response is a fundamental priority for government and community decision makers.

As a not-for-profit organisation working to:

- raise community awareness of, and mobilise community action on particular crime problems; and to
- gather confidential crime intelligence from the community,

CSV has a particularly deep understanding of the role that bystander information can play in preventing and solving crimes and serious community issues.

Information from bystanders can provide a myriad of benefits. Not only does this information assist to solve crimes that have already occurred (CSV currently provides approximately 35 per cent of all police crime intelligence, which leads to over 1,400 arrests per annum); but the fact that five million Victorians could be watching potential offenders also has a very strong deterrent and preventative affect.

The Chief Coroner of Victoria has recognised the deterrent, preventative and crime solution benefits of Crime Stoppers. The Chief Coroner has also recommended that information provided by family, friends, neighbours and work colleagues may also help authorities detect and prevent new and recurring family violence incidents, identify hidden perpetrators, and provide the missing pieces of the bystander mobilisation picture required to bring perpetrators to account if they have a safe and certain avenue for providing this information (Gray, 2015).

CSV always promotes the message that the community should contact the 000 emergency number if an incident or crisis is happening at the time. However, CSV has identified four critical gaps in the bystander activation system for reporting non-immediate information in relation to family violence:



- lack of avenues for bystanders to report non-immediate family violence information to authorities, with none of the current family violence assistance hotlines equipped or designed to take crime information;
- lack of a cohesive, integrated crime information referral framework for providing family violence intelligence to police; then tracking any ensuing investigation; and keeping informants updated on progress if they wish;
- lack of a strong community education program that promotes a viable *call to action* for bystanders to report non-immediate family violence information to authorities; and
- lack of community messaging and support specifically targeted to meet the needs of community reporting by vulnerable cohorts such as:
 - Indigenous communities
 - culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities;
 - the aged or disabled; or
 - gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) communities.

CSV has long-established mechanisms for taking crime information, yet keeping the identities of people who provide the information confidential if they desire. CSV has frameworks and protocols established with police to monitor what happens with the provided information, and can track the progress and outcomes of any ensuing investigations. Through the use of code numbers, CSV is also able to keep informants updated on investigations if they wish, whilst allowing them to retain their anonymity.

These proven mechanisms create a safe avenue for members of the community to provide information that they would not normally give directly to police. Reasons for not going directly to police are many, but the main ones include:

- fear of reprisal, if a perpetrator becomes aware that a bystander has provided information;
- fear of having to be involved in any ensuing police investigation or court processes.

CSV's operating model overcomes these barriers.

CSV also has a solid history of engaging and partnering with the CALD and GLBTI communities to overcome any communication barriers or cultural distrust of providing information to authorities. In fact, CSV provides an extensive outreach service for engaging these communities.



CSV also recognises that indigenous people have very strong cultural systems that will need to be taken into account when designing a framework for providing community information, and is able to work with Aboriginal elders in this area, in much the same way we already work with leaders of all CALD communities. We also recognise that reaching the disabled and elderly, and providing a platform for reporting abuse against these cohorts, will present special challenges. However, we are confident we can sensitively extend our engagement capabilities to any groups that are particularly vulnerable to family violence.

CSV has a long, successful track record of partnering with mainstream and ethnic media outlets throughout Victoria in promoting a vast range of community education programs. These longstanding media partnerships (and CSV's not-for-profit status) enable CSV to leverage the reach and value of any community education program far beyond that which can normally be achieved in government advertising campaigns. CSV's pro bono media footprint for 2014 exceeded \$25 million.

We also recognise that, with the attention that family violence is currently receiving, and with the potential for an increase in reporting subsequent to the Royal Commission, any proposal to provide an additional community reporting overlay will need to be phased in (starting with a low level business-to-business campaign only involving service providers in the first instance), so that intervention responders are not overwhelmed with a tidal wave of intelligence.

Eventually however, this type of enhanced community reporting overlay will have to be extended to the general public if the full prevention, deterrent and detection benefits are to be realised.

CSV contends that the current response to family violence in Victoria does not adequately provide for, or encourage the crucial role that bystander information and community intelligence can play in family violence prevention and intervention. CSV also contends that the current response fails to capture and utilise bystander information, particularly from vulnerable cohorts, allowing potentially vital family violence intelligence to remain unreported or to fall between the cracks.

Consequently, CSV contends that Victoria's current family violence response is missing a vital prevention opportunity. Therefore, CSV proposes that these deficiencies can be addressed



through the development of a single confidential bystander reporting mechanism, integrated across the entire family violence early intervention framework, actioned through four key changes:

- 1. Development of a single, confidential central reporting portal to capture all non-immediate family violence crime intelligence, into which all types of informants, (eg; community bystanders; practitioners from allied health and education fields; and other allied government services that come into contact with families in distress) can provide information.**
- 2. Integration of the single, confidential central reporting portal across the entire family violence response network.**
- 3. Development of family violence community education campaigns and calls to action for the whole community, and campaigns specifically designed to meet the needs of vulnerable cohorts.**
- 4. Adoption of a new metric; “Family Violence Reports (to the central portal)”, in the basket of indices that will comprise the proposed new Family Violence Index.**



Section 1: Crime Stoppers Victoria – Roles and Interests

Crime Stoppers Victoria (CSV) is a not-for-profit organisation helping to keep families and communities safe. Founded in 1987, CSV is a trusted conduit between the public and police designed to collect crime information from the public and pass it on to Victoria Police to help solve crime and build intelligence holdings.

CSV is an active member of Crime Stoppers Australia (CSA), a national federated organisation representing each state and territory's community Crime Stoppers program. Through this federated model, we participate in national crime detection and prevention campaigns and work to drive a nationally recognised community crime brand. CSA is also a member of a worldwide network of Crime Stoppers' programs in over 100 countries, under the umbrella of Crime Stoppers International (CSI). CSI is auspiced by the United Nations as the lead avenue for passing crime information from the community to the police.

Operations

CSV is an Australian Public Company, registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission. We are an independent, community-focused organisation, working closely alongside Victoria Police to collect community crime intelligence.

Crime intelligence

CSV is the provider of an average of 35 per cent of police intelligence holdings. CSV works with the community to provide valuable information to help Victoria Police solve crime. Much of this information would not otherwise be provided directly to police, due to a range of factors including previous negative interactions with law enforcement, cultural barriers leading to mistrust of police or the desire to remain anonymous. CSV's success relies on a close partnership with the community and a strong track record of achievements and trust.

People who provide information to Crime Stoppers can elect to remain anonymous if they wish (and therefore not become involved in any ensuing police investigation or later court process). Members of the community can provide information via a telephone call centre and via an online reporting portal. Both of these avenues are confidential.



CSV is also a trusted partner of Victoria Police. This is because the Crime Stoppers model needs to be able to provide feedback to community informants if they wish, without jeopardising their anonymity. Victoria Police provides feedback to CSV on how the information is used; on the progress of any criminal investigation; and on the outcomes (in terms of offender arrests and crime clearances). Though the use of coded log-in numbers, the original information provider can keep a track of what has happened.

Since our inception in 1987, we have helped Victoria Police make more than 16,703 arrests, lay 67,801 charges and recover more than \$184,382,231 worth of drugs and property. We handle a high volume of community intelligence each year, i.e; from January to December 2014, we received 59,800 confidential phone and online reports about crime information from Victorians (Crime Stoppers Victoria, 2015).

We have also played a significant role supporting Australians in times of crisis, helping identify missing persons and gathering community intelligence in events such as the Black Saturday bush fires and the Bali bombings.

Community campaigns and education

CSV works with the Victorian Government, Federal Government, Victoria Police and other not-for-profit organisations in developing and delivering community education and crime detection campaigns on topics such as sexual assault, youth/nightclub violence and methylamphetamine dealing and trafficking. We also operate a range of targeted, evidence-based prevention and education programs on topics such as bushfire arson, consumer scams, hoon driving and graffiti.

The operating model underpinning the Crime Stoppers' concept is a three-way partnership between the community, police and the media. Consequently, CSV has longstanding partnerships with mainstream media outlets in the television, radio, newsprint and outdoor advertising industries throughout Victoria, which generally broadcast CSV's community education products *pro bono*. This enables CSV to leverage its advertising reach and value far beyond the level and capacity of many community-service advertising campaigns.



Breaking down cultural and language barriers

CSV recognises that cultural and language differences can make it difficult for members of our community to come forward and report crime information, and is committed to breaking down these barriers to create a safer community for all Victorians.

As part of this ongoing commitment, we operate a long established Multilingual Media Program, with more than 65 ethnic media partners working with us to communicate crime prevention and detection messaging to CALD communities across Victoria each week. CSV offers crime information in 24 languages, and we have built language accessibility into our community intelligence gathering mechanisms.

CSV also runs ongoing campaigns with our JOY FM radio partner to specifically engage with the Gay, Lesbian, Bi-Sexual, Transgender and Intersex (GLBTI) community.



Section 2: The harm caused by family violence in Victoria

CSV recognises the gravity and diverse range of harm caused by family violence, and the lasting and significant social and economic impact that family violence has on the community and affected individuals. In dealing with the entire spectrum of crime, CSV not only treats family violence as such, but we also recognise the relationship between family violence and a range of other societal dysfunctions.

Reach of family violence

Family violence is a whole-of-community issue, and is present across all demographics in the Victorian community and affects a diverse range of people of all genders, ages and cultural backgrounds (Australian Government, 2010; Phillips & Vandebroek, 2014). Family violence touches women, men and children - in the year finished December 2014, 53,664 females and 17,239 males were recorded as affected family members in family incidents attended by Victoria Police across the state. Of 71,146 family members affected, 7894 individuals were recorded as being aged 19 years or under (Crime Statistics Agency, 2015).

While family violence affects all demographic cohorts, statistics indicate that women are more likely to experience family violence than men. The findings of the Australian component of the *International Violence Against Women Survey* in 2004 revealed that a woman is killed in Australia nearly every week by a current or former partner, and that more than one in three Australian women who have been involved with an intimate partner have experienced violence at the hands of a current or former partner (Mouzos & Makkai, 2004).

The recent 2012 Personal Safety Survey outcomes estimated that while 41 per cent of women and 49 per cent of men across Australia had experienced violence since the age of 15, women were more significantly more likely than men to have experienced physical assault by a male at their own home. Similarly, women were more likely than men to have been sexually assaulted by someone known to them, subjected to physical violence and emotional abuse by a partner or been subjected to stalking (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013; Phillips & Vandebroek, 2014, p. 6).

Survey results and statistical information indicates that women from non-English speaking backgrounds in Australia experience lower levels of physical, sexual and family violence than



English speaking women do (Mouzos & Makkai, 2004). While this information appears correct on the surface, the true level of harm caused by family violence in CALD communities may be higher than recorded, as women from non-English speaking backgrounds have been found to be less likely to report information about domestic violence to the authorities, or to approach services for assistance (Bonar & Roberts, 2006; Phillips & Vandebroek, 2014, p. 12).

Family violence and crime

Family violence is not only a serious crime issue in Victoria in its own right, that generates a large and increasing workload for Victoria Police and associated agencies, but it is also an underlying cause of a range of other types of social dysfunction and other crimes.

The gravity of the issue is highlighted by the statistics; number of family incidents recorded by Victoria Police has risen 70.3 per cent (Crime Statistics Agency, 2015) in the past five years with recorded incidents climbing from 37,393 in the year ending 31 December 2010 to 68,134 in the year ending 31 December 2014 (Crime Statistics Agency, 2015b).

Family violence can have fatal consequences, with one woman recorded as being killed by her current or former partner in Australia each week (Victorian Government, 2015, p. 3). Data collected by the Australian Institute of Criminology shows that 66 per cent of the 185 domestic homicides recorded in the two years between July 2008 and July 2010 were intimate partner homicides (Chan & Payne, 2013) while *The Lookout* reports that four out of every five intimate partner homicides 'involve a man killing his female partner' (2013, p. 1). The harm is equally as acute in Victoria, with official Victoria Police statistics showing that in the year ending December 2011, 13 homicide offences were derived from family incidents (Victoria Police, 2012).

Non-fatal family incidents encompass a broad range of offence categories including sexual offences (rape), sexual offences (non-rape), assault, property damage, abduction and harassment. Family incidents in these categories have continued to climb over the past five years (Crime Statistics Agency, 2015).

Crimes against the person represent a large portion of family incident offences; in the year ending December 2014, crimes against the person relating to family incidents numbered 24,980,



accounting for more than a third of all crimes against the person recorded across the 12 month period (Crime Statistics Agency, 2015b).

However, there is also a body of emerging evidence to show that people who have experienced or witnessed family violence or child abuse in their younger formative years, also go on to experience many other forms of dysfunction in adulthood, including mental health problems, substance abuse, high-risk behaviours and a significantly increased propensity for criminality (AIFS Child Family Community Australia, January 2014; Phillips & Vandebroek, 2014; Holt, Buckley, & Whelan, 2008; Herrenkohl, Sousa, Tajima, Herrenkohl, & Moylan, April 2008). Research from Florida International University indicated that “...*recent (proximal) exposure to violence in the community along with a history of receiving traumatic news, direct victimizations in the community, recent life and events, and associations with criminal peers increase the risk for young adult criminal offending*” (Eitle & Turner, 2002, pp. 231-232) while a 2001 study into delinquency rates and family violence found that childhood exposure to domestic violence was a significant predictor of youth offending, and more important than earlier child abuse as a predictor of youth delinquency (Herrera & McCloskey, 2001).

Costs of family violence

Family violence has a significant impact on the national and state economies. While the economic costs are difficult to accurately quantify, it is useful to note that in 2009, the National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children estimated domestic and non-domestic violence against women and children left a \$13.6 billion mark on the Australian economy (Phillips & Vandebroek, 2014, pp. 19-20).

Family violence can also have personal and health consequences for victims. While these costs are often difficult to measure, or remain unreported and unattributed, a 2004 report from the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation found that domestic violence was ‘...the leading risk factor contributing to death, disability and illness in Victorian women aged 15 to 44 years’ (Phillips & Vandebroek, 2014, p. 17; Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, 2004, p. 8). It is also recognised that family violence can take a significant and lasting personal toll on children and adolescents exposed to family violence, ranging from but not limited to peer conflicts, trauma symptoms, anxiety, fear, loneliness and increased likelihood of substance abuse (Phillips & Vandebroek, 2014, p. 18).



Limitations of knowledge

CSV acknowledges the limitations of statistical information available around the extent and harm of family violence, and recognises the recent decision by the Victorian Government to develop and implement a Family Violence Index to unite the many disparate threads of family violence information and data, and produce a single indicator of family violence for the state of Victoria (Victorian Government, 2015). If the proposals put forward elsewhere in this submission are accepted, then “family violence reports to Crime Stoppers” could form part of this Family Violence Index.



Section 3: The Gaps:

- Inadequate bystander activation to report information***
- Missing the opportunity to enhance prevention and deterrence by increasing perpetrators' fear (and likelihood) of being caught***

The state-wide response to family violence is a broad fabric comprised of many different threads, i.e; prevention, intervention, victim support and perpetrator accountability.

As a community organisation focused on collecting community and witness information to help stop crime, CSV has a strong focus on motivating bystanders to report what they know to the right authorities. This can enhance the prevention, intervention and perpetrator accountability threads of the family violence response.

In all of its activities, CSV promotes and supports the need for the community to contact the 000 emergency telephone number, if an incident or crime is happening at the time. CSV focusses its community messaging on the provision of non-immediate intelligence either before or after a crime has occurred. On the occasion that calls received by CSV are of an urgent nature they are immediately transferred to 000.

CSV contends that the current mechanisms for motivating and activating bystanders to report non-immediate family violence information to authorities in Victoria are insufficient, unclear and poorly promoted.

Whilst a reasonable person might assume that any information about a crime should be reported to police in the first instance, it has been CSV's experience over nearly thirty years of operation (and much of the criminal literature also acknowledges) that people don't report what they know directly to police, for a variety of reasons including:

- fear of reprisal, if a perpetrator becomes aware that a bystander has provided information;
- fear of having to be involved in any ensuing police investigation or court processes; and
- cultural distrust of authorities, and/or disbelief that making a report will achieve anything.

CSV fills this void to ensure that information which would otherwise not be forthcoming, actually makes its way to police. Due to the close proximity of most witnesses and bystanders to victims and perpetrators of family violence, the above fears and distrust are probably heightened. This



increases the urgent need for a central, confidential information-gathering agent like Crime Stoppers to move into the family violence space.

Importance of bystander action and intervention in family violence

The bystander approach is an integral component in a whole-of-community response to family violence. Research shows the bystander approach ‘...shifts the focus of prevention and intervention responsibilities from a perpetrator/victim centred model’ to the broader community (Branch, Richards, & Dretsch, 2013), and has the potential to play a crucial role in the primary and secondary prevention of family violence (Powell, 2014; McDonald & Flood, 2012; Banyard, Plante, & Moynihan, 2004).

Bystander actions and interventions can take a plethora of different forms, and can occur at any point in a family violence situation: before the violence starts, once the violence has begun, or after the violence taken place. The actions of bystanders can help prevent violence from occurring in the first place, intervene in situations once the family violence is underway, or to bring family violence perpetrators to account (McDonald & Flood, 2012). Bystander actions can take many different forms, from taking a stand against sexist comments, to keeping an eye out for friends and neighbours, and supporting friends and family to seek out support services. (Powell, 2014).

Reporting what they know to the appropriate authorities is a direct and powerful form of bystander intervention. Bystander information reports can serve as the eyes and ears of authorities, and provide crucial intelligence to authorities that would otherwise go unrecorded. Bystander reporting can be immediate or non-immediate. By reporting immediate threats to 000 or the Police, bystanders can help get immediate assistance for the parties involved in the violence. However, by reporting non-immediate threats and other pieces of information about what they know, bystanders can help authorities build a picture of potential and ongoing violence situations, intervene in potential or escalating situations, and help bring perpetrators to account.

The importance of bystander reporting was also in the recent Coroner’s finding into the death of Nicole Joy Millar dated 12 January 2015, handed down by Victorian State Coroner Ian Gray. In his comments, Chief Coroner Gray noted that “...members of a victim’s social network can play a significant role in addressing violence and abuse” and that the actions of family, friends and



colleagues can “...make a meaningful difference toward helping victims increase their safety and address a problematic relationship” (Gray, 2015, p. 6).

Gaps in the current framework

Despite widespread recognition of the vital role that bystander reporting can play in the prevention and intervention of family violence, there are many gaps and inadequacies in the current Victorian response framework, in relation to bystander reporting. Specifically, there are four main gaps in the system:

- lack of avenues for bystanders to report non-immediate family violence information to authorities, with none of the current family violence assistance hotlines or web interfaces equipped or designed to take crime information, nor the established systems to disseminate this information within Victoria Police;
- lack of a cohesive, integrated crime information referral framework for providing family violence intelligence to police; then tracking any ensuing investigation; and keeping informants updated on progress if they wish;
- lack of a strong community education program that promotes a viable *call to action* for bystanders to report non-immediate family violence information to authorities; and
- lack of community messaging and support specifically targeted to meet the needs of vulnerable cohorts such as:
 - Indigenous communities
 - culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities;
 - the aged or disabled; or
 - gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender and intersex (GLBTI) communities.

Lack of avenues for bystanders to report non-immediate family violence information to authorities

The current framework for responding to family violence in Victoria does not adequately support or facilitate bystanders to report non-immediate family violence information to authorities. While there are clear mechanisms in place for victims and witnesses to report immediate family violence emergencies and incidents, chiefly by calling 000 or by contacting local police stations, there are no clear mechanisms in place for bystanders to report non-immediate family violence concerns or information to authorities, and often there is a reluctance to report non-immediate information to police.



It can be difficult for bystanders to find an avenue to make a non-immediate family violence crime report to authorities. As an emergency line, 000 is not designed or equipped to take non-immediate crime information.

Bystanders may also think to approach their local police station, but local commands are not always in a position to process non-immediate crime information in a timely or meaningful way. It is CSV's understanding that while some local commands operate local Family Violence units dedicated to taking and processing such information, they are not always located or available at local police stations, often unavailable 24 hours a day, and some local area commands, particularly those in rural and regional areas, do not have the designated systems and staff in place to routinely process and follow through on such non-immediate family violence information.

Whereas under CSV's existing protocols with Victoria Police, skilled Crime Stoppers' contact centre staff are not only trained to be able to elicit pertinent facts from community callers, but they are also able to interrogate the *Interpose* systems to see if any missing pieces of intelligence can be added, so as to enhance the information provided by the community. The Crime Stoppers contact centre is able to triage and escalate online reports as they are received. All completed information reports are uploaded to the Victoria Police *Interpose* system.

This gap was also recognised by Victorian State Coroner Ian Gray in his recent finding into the death of Nicole Joy Millar, with Judge Gray noting in his comments:

"...the circumstances surrounding Ms Millar's death and many others indicate that families, friends, colleagues and neighbours need an effective mechanism to bring suspected family violence to the attention of an authority empowered and equipped to respond in a timely manner.

Noting that Crime Stoppers is a recognised brand and has accountability mechanisms, I consider that it has the potential to fill the gap between public awareness campaigns and emergency services with respect to family violence" (Gray, 2015, p. 6).

Lack of viable community call to action

There is a general lack of community education and messaging about what to do if anyone knows anything about a family violence situation. Although there has been a recent emergence of



campaigns like “*Say No To Violence*” (aimed at changing perpetrator behaviours) and other campaigns conducted to increase knowledge of supports available for victims, none of these campaigns are specifically aimed at bystanders and raising awareness of what to do if anyone has (non-immediate) information to report. Crucially, none of these existing campaigns have a clear *call to action*.

Even if a member of the community intuitively thought to contact a recognised family violence hotline number like 1800 RESPECT (or any of the other family violence support/referral services mentioned below), these services are not equipped or designed to effectively receive information about a crime, in a manner in which the intelligence can be actioned by police. Nor do these existing dedicated family violence services have the structures or systems in place to automatically convey any reported information on to the Victoria Police *Interpose* criminal intelligence system.

If a central family violence reporting portal was to be integrated into the existing CSV reporting suite of services, given the very strong public recognition of the Crime Stoppers’ brand and established media support future community calls to action could be quickly and efficiently activated.

The public association of the family violence message with the Crime Stoppers’ brand and *call to action* would also underpin the seriousness with which family violence is now being regarded by the government and by the community.

If this community messaging and *call to action* was to become widespread, through CSV’s media reach and leverage across Victoria, it would also raise awareness amongst perpetrators that their actions are likely to be discovered, reported and they are likely to be investigated. This heightened fear of detection, in itself has a deterrent, preventative effect.

Lack of cohesive, integrated referral framework for bystanders seeking to report non-immediate information

Bystanders wishing to go through a support agency to find out how to make a non-immediate bystander information report can also face challenges. Anecdotal evidence and publicly available information show that it can be difficult for bystanders to navigate the current support systems, and to get accurate referral information and advice from support agencies and organisations on how to make a non-immediate information report to the authorities.



At present, there are a multitude of independent and government-supported organisations and agencies in operation across Victoria that work to provide much-needed housing support, and ancillary assistance, counselling and information services to victims and perpetrators of family violence, partner violence and sexual assault. These organisations and agencies include, but are not limited to, the Domestic Violence Resource Centre (DVRC), Safe Steps Family Violence Response Centre, 1800RESPECT National Sexual Assault, Domestic Family Violence Counselling Service, Women's Domestic Violence Crisis Service of Victoria (WDVCSV), Women's Information and Referral Exchange (WIRE), Aboriginal Family Violence and Prevention Legal Service Victoria (FVPLS), Women's Health Victoria (WHV) and Lifeline.

These services operate in a myriad of different ways and at different times. Some services operate online, some on the telephone, some face-to-face, and some in a combination of ways. Some services operate during standard business hours and some operate seven days a week during set hours, while a limited few services operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

While these organisations, services and agencies each play a vital role in educating the community about family violence and responding to the needs of family violence victims, their families and perpetrators, they are inherently designed to assist victims and their families or to change perpetrators' behaviours. As stated above, none of them are equipped to process non-immediate criminal intelligence from the community; they may not always be available when a bystander may choose to make a report; they may not provide an adequate level of anonymity protection; and they do not always provide a useful entry point into the system for people wishing to report non-immediate information about family violence to the authorities (but who do not wish to be involved in any ensuing police investigation or court processes).

Each organisation has its own way of dealing with bystanders seeking to make an information report. For example, the 1800 RESPECT website refers family and friends 'needing help to support a family member or friend' to contact the telephone or online counselling services, but there is no mention of where bystanders can call or visit to report information they may know for prevention and intervention purposes (1800 RESPECT, 2015). Similarly, the Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria provides detailed information to assist family and friends seeking to support loved ones, but while the website advises visitors to call 000 or the Police in case of



immediate danger, it does not make any mention of where bystanders can call or visit to report non-immediate information (Domestic Violence Resource Centre Victoria, 2015).

Indeed, the creation of a single, central and well-promoted reporting portal for non-immediate information, would also assist the referral capabilities of these existing services.

Lack of community messaging and support specifically targeted to meet the needs of vulnerable cohorts to overcome bystander reporting barriers

It is recognised that certain community cohorts such as indigenous people, those from CALD communities, the aged, people living with disability and the GLBTI community are particularly vulnerable to family violence, and are over-represented in reported incidents (Phillips & Vandenbroek, 2014).

The lack of clarity around how to make a non-immediate information report is arguably exacerbated for bystanders from these cohorts who face additional barriers presented by communication barriers, cultural differences and distrust in authority due to negative previous experiences. These differences may also make members of these community cohorts believe that reporting what they know is a waste of time, because they either won't be taken seriously, or that their information won't be actioned.

The outcomes of VicHealth's third *Community of Practice Forum on Working with Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities* in 2014 highlighted some the additional challenges faced by CALD communities in relation to dealing with family violence prevention and intervention; these challenges include the potential marginalisation of CALD community members from mainstream information about prevention through language differences, differing perceptions of what constitutes family violence and what is normal family behaviour due to cultural and religious beliefs and understandings, and differences in immigration status (VicHealth, 2014, pp. 1-3; Powell, 2014, p. 12).

Further research has also shown that women from CALD backgrounds are less likely to access mainstream support services or report domestic violence matters to the police (Bonar & Roberts, 2006). These language and cultural challenges, added to the uncertainty around how and where to report, can cause bystanders to find making an information report overwhelming, unappealing and nearly impossible for members of CALD communities and diverse backgrounds.



While CSV recognises the significant work undertaken by different groups and organisations within the Victorian community to provide support to members of CALD communities on a range of language and cultural topics, CSV has found that there is an apparent deficiency in the level of direct support given for members of CALD communities around the topic of bystander intervention and reporting.

This deficiency represents a significant gap in the bystander reporting system. This gap has the potential to have a detrimental effect across the family violence system, with research into family violence and women from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds indicating that ‘...culturally appropriate service provision gaps lead to access issues and lower rates of reporting...’ (Powell, 2014, p. 12).

CSV has conducted a multi-lingual outreach program, via the ethnic media for over 10 years, aimed at promoting trust in Victorian authorities and over-coming the myths and incorrect cultural beliefs that prevent reporting of any crime information.

For the past five years, CSV has also had a partnership with community radio station JOY FM, which enables us to reach out to the GLBTI community with relevant information and a call to action to say something about intolerable situations that often affect this cohort, via a safe and certain reporting mechanism where their information will be respected and actioned.

Barriers to acting

The decision to report information about violence is never an easy one. There has been much research and academic study around what motivates bystanders to act; this research shows that in order to reach the delicate precipice of committing to action and making an information report, bystanders must go through a tough decision making process. Specifically, they must:

- first notice the family violence and understand that it is no longer tolerable;
- see the situation as one that needs their intervention and assume responsibility action;
- know the best method/s for intervening (having due regard for their own wellbeing);
- make a decision that reporting information is the best way to help;
- have effective and accessible avenues available for facilitating their report; and
- have confidence that their report will be able to make a difference.



(Darley & Latane, 1986; Powell, 2014).

The hard decision to report information can be made all the tougher by the appearance of reporting barriers and difficulties, such as ambiguous intervention and perceived diffusion of responsibility (Banyard, Plante, & Moynihan, 2004). Small issues and delays, such as being placed on hold for an extended period of time or having to wait until the next day for a reporting service to open, can make the already stressful task of reporting information even more difficult, and deter bystanders from carrying through with their planned report (Cismaru, Jensen, & Lavack, 2010, p. 70).

The gaps identified in this submission all have the potential to serve as significant barriers to the bystander decision making process. The uncertainty of how and where to report, the additional language and cultural barriers faced by CALD communities, and the distrust and disbelief that they will be taken seriously (held by certain other vulnerable cohorts), could deter bystanders from committing to making a report, or progressing with a planned report.

The cumulative effect

The current four gaps that we have identified in the system leave a hole in the family violence framework, letting potential intelligence and opportunities for action slip away through the cracks. The cumulative effect of these identified gaps on bystander motivation, intelligence capture and potential prevention and intervention opportunities represents a significant and detrimental deficiency in the state-wide response to family violence; this deficiency needs to be redressed as a matter of priority.



Section 4: The Solution

– A single, central reporting mechanism for receiving all non-immediate family violence information, integrated across the entire response framework

CSV recognises that family violence is a complex and multi-faceted issue that continues to evolve and emerge. There is no single solution to the problem, and a whole-of-community response will need to develop a variety of solutions from a range of perspectives, entry points and approaches.

As a community intelligence collection and dissemination organisation, CSV is primarily concerned with the gaps that we have identified in the areas of bystander reporting, intervention and intelligence. To address these gaps, CSV proposes the development of a single, central reporting mechanism for receiving all non-immediate family violence information, integrated across the entire response framework, actioned through four key changes:

- 1. Development of a single, confidential, central reporting portal to capture all non-immediate family violence crime intelligence, into which all types of informants, (eg; community bystanders; practitioners from the family violence field; and other allied government services that come into contact with families in distress) can provide information.**
- 2. Integration of the single, confidential central reporting portal across the entire family violence response network.**
- 3. Development of family violence community education campaigns and calls to action for the whole community, and campaigns specifically designed to meet the needs of vulnerable cohorts.**
- 4. Adoption of a new metric; “Family Violence Reports (to the central portal)”, in the basket of indices that will comprise the proposed new Family Violence Index.**



Development of a central, confidential reporting portal to capture non-immediate family violence intelligence

CSV recommends that a central reporting portal be developed and implemented to capture confidential, non-immediate family violence information from bystanders across Victoria. This portal would provide a confidential information conduit between bystanders and authorities, and serve to address the current bystander reporting gap in the family violence response framework.

In order to effectively address the gap, CSV believes that this central reporting portal requires several key design features: confidentiality, robust information design, accessibility, and security.

Confidentiality is central to the development of a central reporting portal; the ability for bystanders to report information without revealing their name or contact details is often key to gaining bystander engagement. The proven success of community policing and reporting programs such as Crime Stoppers, and the tested success of confidential family violence reporting campaigns such as the Crime Stoppers Domestic Violence Campaign conducted by Crime Stoppers United Kingdom in 2008, shows the important role that confidential reporting can play in gathering information from bystanders who wish to take action but do not want to get personal involved (Cismaru, Jensen, & Lavack, 2010, p. 76).

In order to fill the gap, the information design of the reporting portal must be robust and relevant. It must ensure that all relevant bystander information is captured fully and in accordance with Victoria Police intelligence requirements, is delivered to Victoria Police in a timely and appropriate manner, and is adequately and smoothly integrated into Victoria Police's operational systems for further investigation. Therefore, people making an online report must be guided as to how best to convey what they know.

To maximise the ease and frequency of reporting, the portal must be readily accessible. The portal should be available to bystanders 24 hours a day, seven days a week, across a number of mediums including web, telephone and smart phones. The portal should include specialised information and translation assistance for bystanders from CALD communities.

To increase the quality and frequency of data, the portal must be easy to understand and easy to use. Whilst intelligence requirements can be complex, the reporting questions should be easy for



bystanders to understand and respond to. The number of questions used in the portal should be sufficient to capture enough information, but limited to avoid overwhelming bystanders and deterring conversions to completed reports. The user interface should be clean and simple, with functionality and navigation given precedence over visual aesthetics.

Due to the nature of the data being captured, security and integrity is paramount. To ensure the security of the data being captured through the reporting portal, the portal mechanism must be supported by a rigorous cyber security system, and be collected, stored and transferred in accordance with strict security measures and intelligence protocols.

Crime Stoppers Victoria is well placed to deliver such a reporting portal. CSV has 27 years of proven experience generating and collecting useful community intelligence to assist Victoria Police to solve crime. After nearly three decades working alongside authorities in the Victorian community policing space, CSV has established the relationships, mechanisms and systems and updated technological infrastructure in place to capture high-quality bystander information from the community to distribute to Victoria Police.

CSV underwent a full technology redevelopment project in 2014 to enhance our online and smart phone application intelligence capture capabilities. This redevelopment led to an increase in the quality and conversion of community intelligence captured online; in the six month period after implementation, we experienced a 44.57 per cent increase in online reports from 4,079 to 5,897, and a 75.73 percent in mobile reports from 1,236 to 2,172. This redevelopment has positioned us as the world's leading online community intelligence collection mechanism.

CSV works with Victoria Police on a daily basis to gather confidential information from members of the community over the telephone and through our desktop and smart phone application; information is screened and triaged by Victoria Police, with information that is deemed to be useful compiled into an information report with additional analytic information added if available, and forwarded to the relevant Victoria Police unit for further investigation.

CSV is uniquely positioned to collect bystander information from CALD communities. We have a suite of multilingual reporting mechanisms in place, along with dedicated multilingual messaging on our website. We also operate an established, internationally recognised Multilingual Media



Program, with more than 65 multilingual media partners working with us to communicate crime prevention and detection messaging to CALD communities across Victoria each week.

CSV already has communication channels and campaigns in place (and has a long, successful track record of delivering previous campaigns) to encourage bystanders to report confidential information to our systems, including our *Say Something* youth campaign which encourages young people to report information about violence, and integrates with our intelligence gathering systems to provide information to Victoria Police. This communication and intelligence gathering capacity was formally recognised by Chief Coroner Gray in his Findings into the Death of Nicole Millar, where he recommended that:

“Crime Stoppers has developed the Say Something campaign, which urges young people who witness acts of violence to be brave and look out for their friends by reporting incidents of violence confidentially. A website and iPhone app are available to help empower young people to report crime easily and online without identifying themselves. I therefore recommend that Victoria Police, together with Crime Stoppers, conduct a trial of extending the Say Something campaign to family violence.” (Gray, 2015, p. 7).

Integrating the central reporting portal for bystander information into CSV’s existing confidential reporting framework would allow bystanders to report non-immediate information to a secure and tested reporting facility with a direct information flow into Victoria Police. By embedding the portal within the CSV system, the reporting service would be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week through our existing website and smart phone reporting applications, and through the Crime Stoppers contact centre which is staffed by trained call takers seven days a week. The portal would also be able to be accessed by non-English speakers through our existing translation arrangements, and bystanders would have access to dedicated written and audio information in numerous languages through our website and smart phone applications.

The ongoing and increasing use and uptake of the central reporting portal system will place additional demands on the Crime Stoppers contact centre team and Victoria Police analysts; to handle the increase throughput of intelligence and Information Reports. CSV believes there would need to be a moderate to substantial increase in contact centre staff numbers to increase both information taking capacity and opening hours.



Integration of the central reporting portal across the family violence support network

Integration lies at the heart of any successful whole-of-community response. In order to attract bystander reports, the central bystander reporting portal must be integrated with all elements of the existing family violence network, including Victoria Police and support agencies, services and organisations.

Integration with Victoria Police

In order to produce meaningful intelligence, the reporting portal must be integrated with existing and future Victoria Police intelligence and operational systems and procedures from the top to the bottom of the structure. This integration is in line with the noticeable shift within the police over the past three decades to work with community agencies and services to provide referrals and support (Phillips & Vandenbroek, 2014, p. 15).

CSV is well placed to achieve this integration with Victoria Police. Our existing relationships, working arrangements and developed information flow processes and procedures place us in an excellent position to liaise with senior staff and members to assure procedural integration, and to promote the service through our internal networks and encourage on-the-ground members to refer bystanders to the portal for non-immediate reports.

The integration of the CSV family violence bystander central reporting portal with the Victoria Police *Interpose* criminal intelligence system should redirect a significant volume of non-immediate family violence information reports away from local police commands and into the Crime Stoppers program, enhancing the overall productivity and efficiency of police commands and improving the quality and accuracy of information reports generated and distributed back to local teams (PriceWaterhouse Coopers, 2015).

Support services, agencies and organisations

Integration of the central reporting portal into existing referral procedures of support agencies, services and organisations is crucial to the success of the system. For the central reporting portal to provide an effective solution, we must first educate the various support services, agencies and organisations who may be contacted by bystanders



In an ideal world, we would integrate the central bystander reporting portal into the existing support framework by promoting it with a large-scale, above-the-line marketing campaign targeting identified bystander demographics and educating the community about bystander intervention and reporting mechanisms. This could, however, generate a landslide increase in the number of bystander information reports put forward and outpace the capacity of both Crime Stoppers and Victoria Police to process and attend to incoming information reports.

Realistically, even with increased capacity, it is most appropriate to recommend that the central reporting portal is initially promoted in a more targeted manner with a below-the-line campaign aimed at educating the support agencies, services and organisations who come in contact with bystanders on a regular basis.

This below-the-line campaign should seek to educate the support agencies, services and organisations on the existence and purpose of the reporting portal, and provide them with the requisite information and tools to integrate the portal into their existing referral systems and information materials. The campaign would include information collateral for the services, agencies and organisations and referral information packs for services, agencies and organisations to distribute to members of the community.

Development of family violence community education campaigns and calls to action for the whole community, and campaigns specifically designed to meet the needs of vulnerable cohorts

After the initial below-the-line campaign to educate existing support agencies has been trialed, and if CSV's (and other early intervention responders such as Victoria Police) capacity can be steadily expanded to cope with a vastly increased level of family violence awareness, a community-based general education campaign (of the type mentioned earlier in this report) can be mounted, with careful monitoring and management of the increased reporting (which will place extra demands on responders) that such a campaign will generate.

In addition to a general community awareness campaign, specific campaigns will also be required to target the needs of those cohorts that are particularly vulnerable to family violence.



CSV does not currently have any campaigns specifically aimed at the indigenous community, but we understand that this cohort has particular needs that may not be addressed by the models proposed in this submission.

CSV does have substantial experience and expertise with targeted Youth, CALD and GLBTI campaigns, all of which are currently operating. In addition, CSV is highly skilled in marketing a generic *call to action* about the entire spectrum of all crimes and has a high level of brand recognition within the Victorian community.

Existing research indicates that women from CALD backgrounds are less likely to report domestic violence to authorities, and are less likely to access mainstream services than women from English speaking backgrounds (Bonar & Roberts, 2006). Women from CALD backgrounds also have differing perceptions of what does and does not constitute family violence (Powell, 2014, pp. 12-14). With this in mind, it is foreseeable that some women and bystanders from CALD backgrounds may slip through the cracks in an integrated system with support services, agencies, organisations and Victoria Police.

To avoid essential bystander information from slipping between these cracks, CSV recommends that targeted communications should be delivered to CALD communities across the state. In line with research into media campaigns around bystander intervention, CSV contends that these communications should work to educate members of CALD communities on what actions constitute family violence, to highlight the benefits and impact of bystander intervention and to encourage bystanders to pick up the phone or make a confidential report (Cismaru, Jensen, & Lavack, 2010, p. 77).

These targeted communications should be both above and below the line, utilising established CALD media channels to communicate directly with members of particular communities, as well as working with CALD community specific services, agencies and organisations to provide targeted information and referral support to members of their community in their own language/s.

It would also be beneficial to produce and upload short, educational audio messages about family violence, bystander information and bystander reporting to the Crime Stoppers Victoria website in



a variety of languages, to provide direct and clear information to bystanders from CALD communities who are seeking information in an accessible format.

These targeted communications would sit alongside but separately to the below-the-line communications to support services, agencies and organisations discussed earlier in this submission. This synergistic approach would complement the other elements of the solution and open up another pathway into bystander reporting for people, particularly women, from CALD communities.

CSV has the requisite expertise, networks and infrastructure in place to deliver these targeted communications. Our existing Multilingual Program represents a state-wide network of multilingual media partners, who we can tap into to deliver targeted multilingual mass media messages in a variety of languages and formats to reach identified CALD communities in particular geographical locations. We have the experience, internal processes, human resources and expertise required to develop and implement targeted education and call-to-action campaigns around crime prevention and reporting, and well formulated distribution channels to deliver the campaigns.

CSV believes that the current response to family violence fails to recognise and harness the full potential of bystander intervention and intelligence. The most effective solution to this gap in the system is to increase the focus on bystander and establish a central reporting portal to capture confidential information from bystanders within the Victorian community. CSV believes the most appropriate, streamlined and secure way to deliver this solution is through existing channels with well-developed links into Victoria Police, such as CSV's confidential online, telephone and smart phone application reporting mechanisms. CSV believes that the development, delivery and integration of this solution would empower previously silenced bystanders to speak up against family violence in a safe and confidential environment, and make a tangible contribution to the response to family violence in our state.

Adoption of a new metric; 'Family Violence Reports (to the central portal)', in the basket of indices that will comprise the proposed new Family Violence Index.

It is well recognised that the true prevalence of family violence is vastly under-reported, and some studies have attempted to ascertain the degree of this under-reporting with under-reporting rate estimates ranging from 30 per cent to 70 per cent of the current level of reported prevalence (Gretch & Burgess, 2011, p. 4; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013).



This has led the Victorian Government to lament the fact that we just don't know how big the family violence problem is (Victorian Government, 2015). To address this gap, the Victorian Minister for Family Violence Prevention announced in May 2015 the intention to develop a Family Violence Index (similar to the CPI basket of indices). This Family Violence Index will draw on a number of different indices to demonstrate whether or not the problem is getting better or worse.

The Victorian Government also announced that it has commissioned the Australian National Research Organisation for Women's Safety (ANROWS) to undertake the research required to define what measures, statistics and data should be included in the Family Violence Index.

Some of the proposed indices that will fill the basket used to underpin the Index include rates of reported family violence incidents; number of police attendances at family violence incidents; number of police referrals of victims to support agencies; number of perpetrators prosecuted etc. However, if a single central reporting portal can be established for receiving bystander information about family violence, then this would also be an excellent and robust source of metrics to inform the proposed Family Violence Index.



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