This qualitative study documents the extent to which histories of perpetrator interventions are present, and the influence of these on sentencing. The study includes an exploration of the views of 80 Australian magistrates and judicial officers on their use and data from five years of intimate partner homicide cases sentenced in Australian courts.

As the first national study to examine the influence of perpetrator interventions on sentences for recidivist and high-risk domestic violence offenders, this project delivers important outcomes that will be of benefit at a state and national level. There are a variety of perpetrator interventions in operation across Australian jurisdictions, including men’s behaviour change programmes and family violence intervention orders, that are considered as part of this research. The project will produce judicial-informed knowledge and recommendations for improved practice and future reform in the use of perpetrator interventions in cases involving domestic violence offending.

This research will benefit government bodies presently tasked with implementing the findings of recent reviews at the state level. The research addresses recommendations made by the Victorian Royal Commission into Family Violence and Queensland Special Taskforce, which both highlighted the need to expand and embed perpetrator interventions into system responses to domestic violence.

The overarching aim of this research is to enhance safety for women and their children through ensuring nationally consistent judicial responses to high risk and recidivist domestic violence perpetrators. Within this, the project’s findings are of particular benefit to the Australian judicial and magistrate community, members of the criminal justice system and perpetrator intervention program organisers who currently operate within a framework where there is minimal understanding of the influence, use and management of perpetrator interventions at sentencing.

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Woman and children at risk of family violence often depend on the success of perpetrator interventions to keep them safe.

However there is very little understanding of how magistrates and other judicial officers use these interventions, and the inconsistencies of how they are used and monitored may have serious consequences for those at risk.