

Royal Commission into Family Violence

7th April 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is [REDACTED]. I am an employee of the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] but I am making this submission in both my professional capacity and my personal experiences.

My personal experiences with family violence begin with my home as a young teenager. I was not aware that there was any violence from my father to my mother prior to this, but I do believe that it existed in a more subtle way. I am a middle child with a [REDACTED] sister and [REDACTED] brother.

The escalation of the violence appeared to have a number of influencing factors, declining and limited income – my father was a self employed [REDACTED] driver and had many failed business attempts, my mother whilst being a high achiever when she was working, was a chronic alcoholic and lost jobs as a result.

As the years went by the abject failure my father felt that he was and my mothers defiance of him (fuelled by alcohol courage) the violence increased. Remarkably both I and my siblings have managed to show resilience and we all hold government jobs. However, emotionally we have struggled resulting in my sister having three failed marriages, myself two and my brother one.

Reflecting upon those years I firmly believe that if my father had access to supports to assist him through his own struggles he would have been better placed to support my mother. I am not making excuses for either of them and I look back upon his behaviour with shame but help was never offered or sought, and I'm sure that other adult family members were aware of what was happening. The abuse my mother experienced resulted in her spiralling decline and so she became a recluse seeking relief through the alcohol, to which seemed to inflame my father more and so the cycle continued.

When looking at my sister, bother and myself and how we have conducted ourselves in our personal lives we were all needy and desperately seeking security and comfort, whilst displaying strong outward capabilities in our working life. Even though we have been able to contribute to society as employees we have also been a huge impost to society in administrative and psychological/medical needs and lost working days. My sister and I both ended up marrying men who eventually displayed violence and my brother has an extreme bad temper. We have all accessed professional help to overcome and learn strategies to deal with our various personal issues. The relationship is clear of exposure to family violence and its impacts for the future.

This brings me to my professional opinion. I have had through training and education on family violence especially the impacts upon children to exposure of family violence.

Research has proven that children experience serious physiological, emotional social, behavioural and developmental damage as a result of exposure to family violence. Simply put, when exposed to violence and trauma a child's brain does not develop as it would under non violent exposure.

It surprises me that more attention is not being focused upon early intervention given all that we know. I am sure that all of the submissions to the Royal Commission will give harrowing accounts of personal trauma and tragedy, but in telling my story I wish to make a point that it is generational, that it is cyclical and the cost to our society is huge.

Our family is just one of many thousands who have accessed services as damaged adults but if my parents had been better educated then I'm sure our clinical needs would have been reduced if not needed at all.

All of society needs to understand the impacts of child exposure to family violence not just professionals working in this area. A lot of attention has been focused to men's behaviour and this is the right thing to do but equally so is teaching our children at an early age and teaching our society of the long term impacts.