

Royal Commission in to Domestic Violence  
Submission May 2015

[REDACTED]

I have not taken part in the group activities which have recently taken place due to immediate unexpected health problems and the need to put in place an interim intervention order to prevent violence from my ex-partner which I felt may take place because I had unexpectedly discovered that he was [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I had an intervention order in place for 3 years which I took out in an effort to stop domestic violence in my relationship while I tried to make it work with counsellors at Relationships Australia. At no time, in spite of escalating violence which had commenced when I became 'needy' while undergoing treatment for breast cancer, did I contact the police until the final episode in which I was found unconscious in the street outside my home and taken to hospital casualty where my injuries were assessed. Since then I've had surgery on my shoulder as a direct result of that accident, when I remember opening his drivers car door (stationary, motor not running). I don't know what happened, but since he was the only witness, and because it was his world against mine and he apparently said that when he left that I was still standing, the police were unable to prosecute a case against this man in spite of the intervention order being in place and in spite of my injuries. Nor was I able to access help with my considerable medical costs from the TAC (Transport Accident Commission) because he had lied, which he admitted to me.

The reason I explain all this despite being aware that every woman has a story as unpleasant or worse, and that the purpose of this hearing is not to give a voice to each tale, is to illustrate a number of issues which I think shows how women can fall through the cracks in support systems which do their best to help us. I request that the Commission look at these factors which prevent women feeling safe in spite of presence of intervention orders and the best efforts of police to act to keep them safe.

First of all, in my current experience at the [REDACTED] Magistrate's Court, as compared with in [REDACTED] when I first obtained an intervention order, the support and kindness evident from every person who helped me come in off the street without premeditation or preparation and obtain an almost immediate order from the Magistrate demonstrated a shift in attitudes which reflects changes in community attitudes. I felt stronger each time someone congratulated me for having eventually found the wherewithal to leave this damaging relationship several years ago.

The first issue for me is that, because I moved in the same relatively privileged circles as my then partner, I did not realise that others with my previous strength, career, and educational opportunities could find themselves in this situation, and felt a sense of shame and humiliation and embarrassment that I had to hide bruises, not swim with my friends, and never talked about this outside a couple of trusted people. My father was dying at the time from cancer also, and all the available personal resources of my siblings, who live interstate and overseas were going in to caring for my elderly parents, so I did not wish to further burden my family with my problems when I felt ashamed that I was so weak that I felt unable to stay out of this toxic relationship. I don't know if the statistics show that women who have higher education are less likely to report these offences but for me the feeling that I should not be in such a powerless situation when I'd had so much advantage in life was a strong force preventing me asking for further help from the authorities.

The second issue was that, had I reported each breach of the intervention order by calling the police at the time or soon after, that the livelihood of this man whom I thought I had strong feelings towards and wished to continue a relationship with, would have been compromised, or so I believed. I was even taunted at times to 'go ahead' but I foolishly felt I did not wish to end our relationship and knew that if I did so it spelled the end for us. I was blamed for damaging this man when I took out the intervention order, I was blamed when violence took place for inciting it, and I am confident that I am being blamed for taking out the recent interim intervention order to feel safe to report what appears to be [REDACTED] fraud.

The last issue I wish to illustrate is the problem which I faced when trying to decide who to report this recent matter of apparent [REDACTED] fraud by a man who had repeatedly physically injured me in the past while we had a relationship, and who I am fearful may decide to take it out on me again if reporting his actions results in investigations which adversely impact on his high-flying career. The first document I read on the [REDACTED] page which is necessary to fill in to file a complaint required me to sign that I was willing to provide this man and his lawyers acting on his behalf to all my [REDACTED] history and the relevant documents so that he could prepare a response to [REDACTED]. Hardly likely since I had been the subject of his abuse and had an intervention order in place for 3 years. I am probably not the first person to find this part of the complaint document impossible to complete and therefore discouraging of filing complaints against [REDACTED] professionals. I believe this document should be examined and recommendations made for appropriate revision, or, as with me, persons who should report behaviour which is not in keeping with professional standards will continue to be discouraged from reporting such matters.

[REDACTED]

I thank members of this Commission sincerely for your attention to these matters and am personally happy to be consulted in the future when my own intervention order is sorted to make a more comprehensive and probably more constructive contribution to this discussion. At this moment events have overtaken me and I write this at the very last moment for it to be considered.

Yours faithfully,

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