

Ms [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED] and her husband had been married for over [REDACTED] years and had two children together when she wanted to separate and divorce ([REDACTED])
- The children, [REDACTED], are now aged [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] says that previous to her wanting a divorce, whilst there had been problems in their relationship, she had never experienced abuse from her partner
- After she expressed her desire to separate from her partner, his behaviour changed and he became abusive
- [REDACTED] wanted a clean divorce, with equal custody over their children, and hoped for a fair solution to dividing up all other assets equally
- [REDACTED] says that her husband, when presented with the news of her wanting a divorce, verbally threatened her using phrases that amounted to “ruining” her
- As the proceedings of the divorce were becoming tricky (due to her husband’s inability to compromise) [REDACTED] found herself still living in their shared house in [REDACTED]
- Her husband would physically block her from interacting with their children and on more than one occasion reacted with violence (however not specifically making physical contact with [REDACTED])
- Such instances of violence perpetrated by her husband included smashing a computer [REDACTED] that sat in front of [REDACTED] with a [REDACTED] bat and then chasing her out onto the street outside their property with the bat held near to her head
- [REDACTED] found that her husband would act in strange ways in order to agitate her
- He took to working from home (telling work that [REDACTED] was bipolar and abusive and had to be at home to protect the children) and continuously provoked [REDACTED] throughout the day
- He would poke and prod her as he tried to block her from doing certain things, he would occasionally hide certain items from [REDACTED] for no apparent reason
- He began to take control of her finances, cancelling her bank card and transferring money from her account into his without asking
- He would turn the home phone ringer on to silent when [REDACTED] was out so that the children wouldn’t know she had tried to call them
- He also began to condition their children, telling them that their mother was crazy and that she was a [REDACTED] prostitute
- When [REDACTED] felt that she needed support from Police at [REDACTED] Police Station, they did not act, they suggested that as her husband was the father of her children, he had the right to say whatever he pleased to them

- As [REDACTED] became increasingly distressed by the abuse and the worsening relationship she had with her children (due to her husband's lies) she felt that she needed legal advice and representation
- Her lawyers advised her not to leave, as her husband could change the locks
- If she had tried to leave with the children (as they were her number one concern), he would have had them ordered back under law
- He rarely left the house
- [REDACTED] went around the property to take photos of the furniture and assets so that she could organise what was hers etc.
- Her husband noticed this and it made him angry, he set up the [REDACTED] dangerously which made wooden planks fall on to [REDACTED]'s head as she entered
- On one occasion [REDACTED] rang 000, the police said they would dispatch some uniformed officers to come down – [REDACTED]'s husband called the [REDACTED] Police station and said something to the effect of "oh don't worry she'll calm down it's fine" – the police did not end up coming
- [REDACTED] believes that her husband had spoken to the [REDACTED] Police previously, engaging them in the false pretence that [REDACTED] suffered bipolar and was sometimes abusive
- On [REDACTED] [REDACTED]'s husband stole and hid her car keys, parked his car in front of hers and blocked hers in so that she couldn't leave in her car
- [REDACTED] heard her car door being shut and went out to see what was going on – her husband had put the mail in her car and then accused her of trying to steal it – it was mail addressed to her
- [REDACTED] ran inside, her husband followed and grabbed her by the front of the neck and slammed her against a wall
- [REDACTED]'s daughter [REDACTED] heard and came into the room – [REDACTED]'s husband promptly let go of her, [REDACTED] pushed him back to get him away from her
- [REDACTED] saw this
- [REDACTED] wanted to take her daughters and leave but again, her car was blocked in and she had no idea as to where her keys were
- Her husband took hold of their other daughter (with force)
- The daughter was in pain and he wouldn't let go of her arm
- The husband took his two daughters in his car to the [REDACTED] Police Station and told them about the incident, stating that he'd been attacked unprovoked by [REDACTED], he got the children to say this to the Police as well

- When [REDACTED] finally found her keys, she drove to the Police in [REDACTED] only to be arrested
- She was then, effectively, thrown out on to the street
- Of this [REDACTED] states "If it's a woman put on the street, she's given up her job usually for her children, you know, I only worked part time, I'm lucky I had a car."
- In this situation, [REDACTED] had no one but some friends with couches that she was able to sleep on, if her husband had been the one 'on the street', he would have had his mother, his sister and other family members of his who had ample space and spare bedrooms
- Financially too, [REDACTED] was in a far worse off position, having had to end her [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and then being let down from job after job due to the stress she was under because of her husband's abuse
- Over an approximately [REDACTED] month long period, [REDACTED] had to attend many court hearings and mentions, many of which she was not listened to by judges nor were her children properly questioned as to their statements
- [REDACTED]'s husband used private photographs of her to suggest that she was involved in [REDACTED] prostitution to the court, this was a flagrant lie
- [REDACTED]'s husband continued to throw allegations at her – that she was a drunk, a bad driver, on drugs, not there for the children, had bipolar etc.
- [REDACTED] had to spend thousands of dollars on legal representation, document procurement and on proving the stability of her mental state
- During one hearing, the judge ruled that [REDACTED] and her now ex-husband would share living in their house, one of them for the first half of the week and the other the second half of the week
- [REDACTED]'s ex-husband started up his strange abusive behaviour again, doing things like taking the sheets off her bed, leaving no food in the house (affecting the children as well) putting the dirty dishes in the garage and stealing personal treasured items of [REDACTED]'s
- [REDACTED]'s attempts at having the abuse that both she and her children suffered investigated went unfulfilled, it was said that her ex-husband would be investigated for the allegation of physically abusing their daughter and leaving a large bruise on her arm, so [REDACTED] dropped her AVO on him for this to happen – it never did
- [REDACTED]'s ex-husband's mother lied in court and stated that she had been a primary carer to the children
- On [REDACTED], the court orders came stating that [REDACTED] had won custody
- By this stage, due to the upwards of \$100,000 that she had had to spend in legal costs, [REDACTED] had lost her house
- She felt so thoroughly let down by the legal system

- On that, [REDACTED] said "They didn't care that I had no one there [for me], nowhere to go, [they] provided no services. And they were cruel to me. "If they sat down with me on that first day I got arrested I could have said 'O.K, bipolar, which doctor did he reckon I went to and was diagnosed by?' "Some of the judges in [REDACTED]; too sexist to be doing their job,"
- [REDACTED] was hardly ever given an opportunity to give evidence of her ex-husbands lies
- The [REDACTED] children were attending [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] had had a generally positive relationship with the school and the Principle ([REDACTED] [REDACTED]) until her ex-husband began to spread rumours and tell lies about her to them
- He spouted off the same allegations that she was an alcoholic, she was abusive, she had bipolar, the kids were scared of her etc.
- There was a situation at the school one day where [REDACTED] went there at about 3pm to find out if he ex-husband had paid for some singing lessons (it wasn't her day to pick them up but she was still allowed to be at the school)
- Her ex-husband's mother was there picking the kids up instead, [REDACTED] briefly spoke to her daughter [REDACTED] about why she was there and then went over to her ex-husband's mother ([REDACTED])
- [REDACTED] walked off without saying anything to [REDACTED], [REDACTED] went with Emily to find her other daughter, again, when she found her other daughter, she simply explained to her why she was there (regarding the money for lessons)
- She left the school
- This led to one afternoon ([REDACTED]) the Principle allowing (against a court order) for [REDACTED]'s ex-husband to take the children from the school without her knowledge
- [REDACTED] only found out after waiting for a long time and then speaking to the Principles wife, [REDACTED] [REDACTED], who told her to go and speak to the Principle
- Then [REDACTED] told her that on the day that [REDACTED] had come to pick up the children, she had gone to his office and told him that [REDACTED] had arrived with her 'boyfriend' and that she had 'abused' her in front of the youngest daughter [REDACTED]
- These were all lies but they were 'lapped up' by the courts and (even though the Principle and [REDACTED]'s ex-husband had acted in breach of a court order) [REDACTED] subsequently lost custody of her children
- This brings us to the present, [REDACTED] only has 5 hours a fortnight to see her children, she is financially strained and emotionally exhausted
- [REDACTED] almost feels as though she has lost hope of reconnecting with her eldest daughter as her ex-husband did such a thorough job of conditioning her
- The legal system has let [REDACTED] down, it lets women down every day

- [REDACTED] was forced to live with and endure financial, physical, emotional and psychological abuse
- [REDACTED] would like it added that:” The police refused to act when he [her ex-husband] was taking my kids away on weekends against my wishes. Not because he was telling them stuff. The day I was at the school and was alleged to have abused the mother was Friday [REDACTED]. I passed a supervised drug test but it didn’t matter. CSA and Centrelink immediately transferred child support and parenting allowances to him (her ex-husband). He is still abusing the court orders and no one will help me, I need a pro bono lawyer.”

This submission was written by Ms [REDACTED] of [REDACTED], VIC, [REDACTED], for and on behalf of Ms [REDACTED] of [REDACTED]. Ms [REDACTED] and Ms [REDACTED] had a detailed discussion that was recorded in order for this submission to be written and is reflective of the thoughts, feelings and experiences of Ms [REDACTED].