

I sit here at wonder where too start. I am one of the many women who have experienced family violence. Violent abusive behaviour from my ex-partner over a 4 year period.

I haven't mention everything on this submission, it would be over 1000 pages, however below is some of the abuse myself and the children experienced.

The toll on my children and I cannot be measured. I lost everything: \$70'000 worth of household goods, all my identification other belongings and sentimental things that cannot be replaced; precious photos, school reports, the list goes on.

My children, (he wasn't the father) lost all their belongings too. He gave away our beautiful pets, (my two dogs that I had for 14 years), and our cats. (He couldn't stand me giving them attention; he would become jealous and threaten to hurt them.)

The most distressing thing I lost was me, myself worth. Couldn't think straight, even to the point I couldn't write out a shopping list: I couldn't concentrate. I was always worried that I may do or say the wrong thing. It is so hard to describe to you the mental torment, always questioning yourself. Never being able to comprehend; that this person who is supposed to love me can hurt you so badly.

I became pregnant with his baby, and the abuse became worse. On one occasion he throws me in the pool smashing my head on the concrete.

I lost my baby at 5 weeks.

I became pregnant again, and went to the Gold coast to have an abortion, I was petrified having a child with him, and I feared that he would hurt the baby. He found out and accused me of being a baby killer, harassing me day and night with phone calls.

My son went back to live on the Gold Coast, and he was much traumatised from events, not talking to me for nearly 2 years. I found out my ex in the beginning would ring him saying this all happened because of me. I am happy to say now my son and I have got our relationship back. I cannot describe to you that this broke my heart; I found it hard to function every day.

My daughter has now anxiety and mild depression because of the witnessing of abuse, and the verbal abuse he would inflict on her.

On two occasions I tried to take my life by swallowing pills, I didn't want to die I wanted to give him a message that I wanted his abuse and pain to stop. I doing this however gave him more ammunition to say to everyone I was a mental case.

I had tried to leave on countless occasions; he would threaten to hurt my family, me and the children if I didn't come back. I have lost count how many times he said sorry.

### **Physical violence:**

He would threaten to punch me.

Chocking, spilling hot drinks on me, pushing, flicking cigarettes, spitting, pushing me of beds and chairs.

Smashing my head against walls.

Whilst going to the toilet he would push me off the seat.

Push me over in the shower,

Verbal threats: calling me names; slut as asshole, cunt, and many more.

He said he would bury me in a hole and threaten to shoot me.

Always threatening to hurt my children, family and animals.

Throwing objects at me.

Throwing me out of the house in the nude, locking the door and not letting me in for 3 hours.

### **Emotional and psychological torment:**

Scapegoating, blaming me for everything, saying I deserved it, (the abuse) and it was my fault, I was a bad mother, locking me and the children out of the house.

There were a few occasions I had to sleep outside with the dogs.

Walking on eggshells

My children witness the abuse, however I would go into the bedroom, where he would follow me and attack me. I didn't want the children to see.

Manipulation: talking to the children and then using what they had said against me.

Accuse me of having affairs, (later found out he was having affairs).

Accuse me of saying he had raped me that is why he would violently attack me.

He would come in to work all the time, if I was 10 minutes late from work he would ask why. I had to eventually leave my employment; was sick all the time and mentally exhausted.

Wasn't allowed to have my own opinion, everything I said was wrong or stupid.

Would get very agitated when he saw me happy.

### **Economic control:**

Would accuse me of spending his money, (even though I was working too)

Got to the stage I couldn't even write a shopping list; was fearful if I would spend too much

Would say I was hopeless with the finances and would keep money from me.

I wasn't allowed to buy essentials for myself or the children.

Would not allow me to get food from the fridge and pantry: because he bought it.

Was extremely fearful of bring up the subject of the finances, he would get agitated and angry. Trying to do the family budget was impossible; he wouldn't listen but blamed me when bills weren't getting paid. Over time I was even too afraid to go and pay bills.

**Damaging of property:**

Would smash furniture

Would buy things for me and the children, then accuse us of being ungrateful and either smash them or throw them out.

Ripped up my bags, wallets and clothing.

Ripped off my jewellery (whilst wearing it)

Take my car keys so I couldn't leave the house.

**Isolation.**

I met him while I was living on the Gold Coast. Eventually moving in together, (this is when the abuse started), he would ring up or go and see my friends, and always complain about me. He convinced me to move up to Townsville, (with my children). We didn't know anyone, moving into his sister's house. Living in Townsville is where the violent abuse became more frequent. He would also verbally abuse my children.

He didn't like me talking on the phone to my family, and when I suggested coming down to Melbourne to visit, he would always make excuses of why I couldn't.

We had to come down for a wedding and when we came back he would constantly accuse me of spending his money to go down there, he always made me feel guilty for wanting to see my family and friends.

We then had to move to the Sunshine coast, again knowing no one.

When we moved to the Sunshine coast for the first 3 weeks the abuse stopped, however I was suffering from anxiety, and constantly walking on eggshells. I had just had heart surgery 2 months prior.

The day I left him was also the day I thought I was going to die. I endured a 3 hour violent attack, where he was kicking me, throwing me up against walls and on the floor, choking me, where I would go in and out of coconscious, (this is where I said goodbye to my family, children and friends, I truly thought and accepted that this was my last breaths). He would punch me, suffocate me, and threaten to throw me off the balcony.

I managed to text a friend "help me"; she lived on the Gold coast. She rang the police, and then my mum in Melbourne, where she also rang the police. They arrived 20 minutes later. I had blood all over my face and my dressing gown was ripped. (he was arrested and charged), with grievous bodily harm.

An ambulance was called and rushed to hospital. They thought I may have had bleeding on the brain, and due to my heart operation not long before, they were worried about clotting. I stayed in hospital for nearly 4 days due to my injuries. I have

now a jaw disorder and a scare on my face. Being discharged, I went straight to the police station to do my statement, and they escort me to the house to retrieve some belongings: I had 10 minutes and managed to throw some clothes in a suit case. I fainted going into the apartment I was so scared.

I stayed on the Gold Coast for 2 weeks until my bruises and other injuries healed before going back to Melbourne, (I didn't want my mum, dad and other family members seeing me like that). Coming back to Melbourne I had to go to Centrelink to apply for a crisis payment, and open up new bank accounts and start my life over. I saw a psychologist for a number of months, and she diagnosed me with PTSD, even though the nightmares aren't as frequent now they still happen.

The police were fantastic and cannot praise them enough for the help they gave me; however I cannot say the same about our justice system. My ex was able to adjourn his case over 5 times, constantly lying to the magistrate. He did get a criminal conviction to his name;( I am the only one who has managed to do so), getting a 12 month suspended sentence is not justice at all.

I have found out that he has also violently abused 6 other women and put 3 of us in hospital. He knows how to manipulate the system and once he found out that 4 of us that have been abused started communicating he put intervention orders on us to silence us.

I thank you for giving me this opportunity to submit my personal experience with family violence, I would like to add that I am doing fantastic now, this was 3 years ago, and with the amazing support of my family, children and psychologist, and my wonderful new partner, I have been able to heal, and not be a victim but a survivor.

I am stronger and empowered than ever before, and I am now completing my dual diploma in Community Services and Case management to achieve my goal, (and passion) to work in the family violence sector to help women and children recover from family violence and rebuild their lives, it can be done, and I have done it.

Please do not hesitate to contact me for further information

Kind Regards

Nicole Brand