

I write regarding my experience of Family Violence and Family Law Court Proceedings.

I am a [REDACTED] year old mother of 3 young children aged [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] whom have all experienced acts of violence through the years that I was married, separated and ongoing. As a result of the proceedings in the Family Law Court we have all been subject to the systems inability to recognise abusive behaviours and make appropriate decisions. Our experience of Family Violence is inclusive of Verbal Abuse, Emotional, Mental, Physical, Sexual and Financial. In [REDACTED] my husband at the time threatened to kill me and stated I would get nothing. He has suffered from Mental Health Issues, has unhealthy habits of drinking and gambling and has been medicated for depression for years.

My children and I have endured years of pain and suffering and in our attempt to improve our quality of life by separating from him we have only endured more through the Family Court System.

The current Family Court System has views that both parents are expected to have contact with their children regardless of the risk factors and the potential consequences this may have on the children who are exposed to ongoing Family Violence... "How is this in the best interest of the children"!!!

The current Family Courts practices do not take into account the children's point of view and as a result the children have not had a voice and this has had a detrimental effect on children's welfare and safety and emotional wellbeing.

Through the process of reporting the acts of violence to the various authorities I was informed that when Applications are put into the Family Court "It's no longer about the children as they have now become a division of property."

The Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference was held in 2014 and there were presentations on the adequacy of Independent Children's Lawyers (ICL's) and a concern that ICL's are not qualified or skilled adequately and there is a requirement that they meet the children if they are to represent them.

My children were appointed an ICL within the Family Court System when they made disclosures about their father and his inappropriate behaviours towards them, and to this day they have not meet with the ICL and she has not spoken with me regarding the serious concerns that the children raise about their father. Why is she representing them if this is the case???

Disclosures made during interviews with numerous court appointed Family Consultants concerning the family violence we have been subject to has not been believed and as a result my 3 children have been forced to live with their father against their wishes and are now at risk whilst in his care. Why have the children not been believed within the Family Court System yet DHS have had more involvement with the children and believe that the fathers care should be restricted and supervised however the ICL has opposed DHS's views. The children need to have a voice!!!

Where is the children's protection and safety?

Why are ICL's not held accountable for their actions?

Why have the children been silenced?

Where is the Justice in the Family Court System?