

Although it has been over [REDACTED] years since my family was affected by domestic violence, the trauma and circumstances that contributed to the final outcome I believe is still relevant to this day.

I am now [REDACTED] but from the time I was born until the age of [REDACTED] I witnessed the effects of domestic violence on my family. My mother was a victim of domestic violence. She was beaten, verbally abused and cut off financially. I have [REDACTED] sisters, [REDACTED] older and [REDACTED] younger, and without the financial support my mother had nowhere to go. Back in the early 90's there was not as many services or publicity about domestic violence as there is these days however the issue is still as big as it was back then. My mother chose not to tell anyone about the violence as family relationships especially in the [REDACTED] culture needs to stay behind closed doors.

My father had threatened her life a couple of times and it was in [REDACTED] that the police were called to our house after the neighbours heard the fighting. We were put into women's shelters however my father hired a private investigator who would find us and tell him where we were. We were moved about [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] times. My mum was given the option to be put into a women's shelter in QLD however she did not want to move away from our family so opted to stay in Victoria. Throughout all this time my mother had a restraining order in place however this did not stop my father from coming near us.

We were moved to a women's shelter in [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] and on [REDACTED] my father found us through the use of a private investigator and through the unfortunate mistake of a teller at a bank and stabbed her to death when she went out for a walk to [REDACTED]. At the time my father ran off, however he drove back to Melbourne and turned himself into the police. Privacy laws have since been changed however it was the lack in privacy laws and the release of private information that contributed to my mother's death.

The case went to court and my father was sentenced to [REDACTED] years in prison, then he appealed and received just [REDACTED] years imprisonment on charges of manslaughter. If I am not mistaken Manslaughter is the term used when a killing is done without intent or when there are mitigating factors, for example someone lashes out on someone and causes the murderer to snap and kill the victim. For the last [REDACTED] years I have not been able to understand how my mother, the victim who was walking down the street, who did not start a fight with my father or cause him to take her life could be killed and have the courts label it manslaughter. There was clear intent that my father wanted her dead and had brought a knife with him to [REDACTED] with the intent to kill her. He had threatened her life in the past and this was still classed as manslaughter in the eyes of the courts.

Here is where I see the gaps in the fight against family violence. Intervention orders are taken out by victims with the hopes of keeping them safe from the offender, however in reality restraining orders are broken all the time and women are murdered even when an intervention order is in place. My mother had an intervention order out on my father however this did not stop him. Due to funding cuts there are not enough services for women who are trying to escape family violence and in a lot of instances the women and children will end up homeless if they choose to leave. Without the access to women's shelters my mother would not have been able to leave my father and we would have been stuck in an abusive home.

In my opinion education about violence against women needs to be done in primary schools and the gender inequality needs to be addressed. The belief that men need to be strong and women are weak is installed into children's thoughts from the moment they are born. In order to tackle the issue of violence I believe we need to address gender inequality and teach children about the effects of violence.

I think the target should be put on the perpetrator and perhaps tougher consequences need to be put in place when someone is charged for family violence. I think this can be done by creating compulsory courses that the perpetrator needs to attend to address their offending behaviour.

I believe that this royal commission is an excellent start to tackling the issue of family violence and only wish that there was more assistance and support around in 19█ that could have assisted my mum.