

Domestic violence was not something I ever considered a part of my life until [REDACTED] 2011 when a Centrelink social worker told me I'd been in a dv relationship - at that point I had no idea what she was talking about, but that was because back then, not only did I not realise that dv was about more than physical violence, I also had no knowledge of the dv tactic of 'Gaslighting' - a tactic I have learned over the course of time is little known even within the dv sector, but especially within the so-called 'justice system'.

At the time I left my husband in [REDACTED] I thought I was evil incarnate. I had a decade long history of [REDACTED] as well as an extensive mental health file. He was the pillar of the community right down to being the [REDACTED]. I believed I was illogical, irrational, that I destroyed the lives of all those whose lives I entered, that I hadn't had a single good idea or thought in over a decade; I believed I was boring and that if I left him nobody would ever want me and if they did, they would only ever want me for sex - as they say 'tell someone something often enough, they believe it'. I fully believed I was the problem until the community services sector started telling me otherwise - the reason I'd left made me start paying attention - he'd had an affair for which I had hard, black and white physical evidence and he still tried telling me I was imagining it - at the same time my [REDACTED] had managed to help me start a business, the way my clients were treating me made me question my beliefs about myself - I went for a few days to think about things - I never went back.

All I wanted when I left was to see my children and have my personal property returned - the two things the he knew I wanted he made sure the court system kept from me and magistrates and judges have assisted him along with Victoria police every step of the way.

I hate VicPol. They are a joke and in my case actively assisted him. [REDACTED] I started talking to this officer about what was happening in my life - he wouldn't let me have my stuff - she suggested I take out an IVO. I avoided it as long as I could, but when I wasn't getting anywhere I followed the advice I was given. I was given an interim order in [REDACTED] and declined the offer to move back into the house for a whole number of reasons including it being in a satellite town with no employment opportunities. The Magistrate put my children on the order and for some reason still unbeknownst to me the police officer who was supposed to serve the order on my ex-husband phoned [REDACTED] Magistrates Court [REDACTED] and had the order varied - he had my children removed from the order without my knowledge or consent - [REDACTED] - no police officer should ever be allowed to vary an intervention order, period. - let alone without the knowledge AND consent of the applicant AND this should NEVER be allowed to be done over the telephone.

This police officer's actions led to the other thing [REDACTED] - this order lapsed because I didn't realise the date had changed because I was hysterical - a police officer actively put my kids in danger and then when my husband breached the order I was told to 'phone a friend', hysterical was an understatement - I had no supports, my world was crumbling. After the order lapsed my ex-husband through his legal representation started IVO applications against me - his legal representation is [REDACTED] - and that what needs to change - it's bad enough that I was at times inundated with legal letters, but from them to be from your [REDACTED] - I cannot begin to tell you what that does. Without exception, every legal person and community services worker

has questioned conflict of interest, but according to the Legal Practitioners Board, it is not a conflict. My former [REDACTED] has read my medical files - the feelings of violation that brings I'm not prepared to discuss.

Legally I was slaughtered. After my initial order lapsed and he'd applied for an IVO, I did the same. The magistrate was horrible, in fact she was such a bitch that I left there and took exactly the same statement to the police station. The same statement that was dismissed by a magistrate started an investigation into the sexual assault and rape of me and the sexual abuse of [REDACTED] - something that was by this stage being investigated by child protection (DHS) and became a joint investigation from that night.

There was no help. I was told I'd been in a dv relationship. I was told things that I had been made to believe were normal were not only the sexual abuse of me, but also of [REDACTED] and it was happening to her in front of my eyes without me realising it. I fell apart. I lost my business. I had a Centrelink error occur. I couldn't access legal help. I had to sell everything I owned. I ended up homeless and couch surfing with some friends in a satellite town that led me to being unable to access the legal representation the court had ordered, which led to me completely snapping [REDACTED] making me miss the appointment and I ended up deciding to put a bullet through his head - [REDACTED] - I'm a mum - these were my babies and I knew that by missing that appointment with my lawyer I was going to be unrepresented in court, that I would be unable to say anything and the magistrate was effectively going to hand my children over to someone who was under investigation for child sex offenses - and that is what came to be - the case should have been adjourned, but the magistrate refused and because of his decision he locked children into the hands of someone who was under investigation [REDACTED]

I hated Victoria and I knew if I stayed I would end up dead or in jail so I went to [REDACTED]. The police weren't talking to me. DHS weren't talking to me. I was going insane with worry and I had found out in court that both organisations had been speaking to him and keeping him informed. As I left the state I sent what turned out to be a [REDACTED] email to [REDACTED] explaining the investigation and telling them that what went on in that house was not normal - lock the bathroom door. I ended up being charged for [REDACTED] breaches of the IVO as a result. He used my mental health and [REDACTED] against me every opportunity he got. He somehow manipulated every legal avenue he could to make them believe I was insane and they reinforced it. I kept expecting that some magistrate or judge would see through his lies and deception at some point. My family court application once I was finally able to access legal help was five pages because I wanted to see my kids desperately - he and his brother responded with [REDACTED] affidavit. Every step, every court upheld his side that I was insane and couldn't be trusted with my children despite that for the [REDACTED] years we were together, he was more than happy for me to look after my children including driving them around whilst [REDACTED] while he went to work for extended hours - now here I was away from him and for some reason I couldn't be trusted even though I'd gotten clean, rehoused and had stabilised my life through an extensive support network that was opened up to me. No judge took into account where my life was at the point I was before them, a position he had stated in affidavits I was incapable of achieving - including at one point suggesting the state took control of my money because I was too irresponsible - something I can prove false. He contradicted himself. He perjured himself. He

breached orders. He violated me and every magistrate told me it was my fault and punished me - in many people's eyes more harshly because I was a female.

Our magistrates are a joke. I have recordings of magistrates making judgements and stating they have not read the file, but make judgements based on it. I am now into the [REDACTED] year of IVO fights - I'm tired. The family court has removed all my legal rights to my children and put conditions on us that would test the mental health of the strongest person so instead I have decided to cease all contact with my children because that just makes me sick - I trust they will return once they question the brainwashing. IVO's are so ridiculous that we are awaiting a County Court date in [REDACTED] appealing the last extension, but every time this comes up I get sick.

When I'm not in court I spend my time as a [REDACTED]. Having the role I have is mentally challenging - I constantly have to relive the trauma I experienced as a result of homelessness and our injustice system - it constantly challenges my mental health, but it does so in a healthy way - after losing my kids in family court I decided I could no longer fight back instead I decided to fight forward because I've met so many men and women who it turns out aren't as strong as me - the courts are perpetuating gaslighting and it's making people sick - it is disgusting that in this state it is easier to organise vigilante justice than it is to get justice through our justice system.

Gaslighting needs to be better understood. Courts need to start looking out for people who are using the legal system as a form of abuse. [REDACTED] years on I want nothing to do with him. I want him out of my life with no power or control over it, but the courts keep handing him power and control as well as allow him to access me through his brother at any point he likes sending my mental health out of whack and blaming me for being unreasonable with any reaction other than silence which is then seen as unreasonable.

I miss my kids. A police officer varying an intervention order allowed a situation to occur where somebody was able to use a relative as legal representation against another family member and it led to [REDACTED] children being locked into the hands of somebody under investigation [REDACTED] - isn't it lucky I'm not the psychopath he keeps telling the courts I am and they keep confirming? Allowing you to publish this could possibly be seen as an IVO breach, but not allowing it to be published perpetuates the violence further which is why I'm prepared to take the risk, allow this to be published and see whether the abuse continues.