

**Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence****██████████ Prison****Anonymous (██████████)****9 June 2015**

I come from a loving family. My father ██████████.

I was sexually abused at the age of ██████ by someone who was close to my family. I am now starting to finally deal with what took place. It was closeted because of my age and the era that it happened in. It was never spoken about, except for a brief conversation with my father at age ██████.

I am still dealing with the anger about why my parents didn't address the issue further, and didn't support me emotionally and psychologically.

I was raped at the age of ██████ by a friend, which I have never discussed with my parents to this day. I went off the rails after that for a period of two years. I never touched drugs, but I did drink. I am a binge drinker.

I met my ex-husband at the age of ██████ and we married at ██████. We had a honeymoon period. We had our first child at ██████. He is of ██████ origin, and I am ██████████. Our first child was diagnosed with a debilitating illness at the age of ██████ and our financial struggles began.

His abuse started after he started drinking. Then I started getting demands for sex. There was no kissing. I was continually told I was a liar.

I worked as a nurse, seven night a week. I fed the children, bathed them and put them to bed before I started my shift. His demands for sex, even in the presence of our children, didn't concern him. There was also financial control. The issue of where money went and how it was to be spent was always in his control.

I used to come home from an evening shift for the ██████ years prior to me leaving him and I would wait outside to make sure he was asleep. I knew how to unlock the back door in such a way that he wouldn't hear the click. I would crawl all the way to our bedroom trying not to disturb him. If I worked a morning shift, I would come home, and he would be drunk and the children would be unfed. The nappies would be unchanged. He was someone who I assisted to climb up the corporate ladder. He started as a ██████████ and now has a prestigious job working for a company that is well known and he is on a six figure income.

I tried to ensure that when I left him, which I planned for the last ██████ years of our marriage, that I would walk away with my children. I had the children, but I did not touch him financially, because I thought it would mean he would leave us alone. I also had ██████████.

For ██████ years after I left him, he continued to harass, stalk, and provide me with abusive and degrading phone calls, text messages and voice mails.

He uses our children to this day as a tool of manipulation. My incarceration has provided him with further tools of control. He provides permission for family ties, where I get to go home to spend one on one time with my children in a family home, and then 24 hours later he revokes it. This is his way of continuing in his control.

In the absence of court orders, he chooses to allow my children to see me once every [REDACTED] weeks.

My children go to private schools. During my incarceration they are residing with my ex-husband and his current wife. They don't miss out tangibly, but psychologically the degradation continues.

Whilst I was in hospital going through [REDACTED] and my second major operation for the [REDACTED], he rocked up at the hospital drunk at 2.30 and tried to have sex with me in the hospital.

I'm sharing this story because I come from an age and an era and a socio-economic status where it wasn't the right thing to air dirty laundry. I now know that that's wrong because the abusers need to be taught that their behaviour – the controlling, the degradation and the manipulation – is not right and that family and friends who choose to judge the abused need to be aware of what abusers actually can look like.

It doesn't come from lower classes or higher classes, or just middle classes. Anyone can be abused or an abuser.

There needs to be further education. Our society is more multicultural, and we are seeing more mixed marriages/relationships and we need to educate people in schools about violence. Multiculturalism – although we support it – is not excuses for abuse.

[REDACTED] being [REDACTED] his father never showed him any affection. I used to use that as an excuse for the reason he was the same with me. I used to think I was allowing him to be like that and I always made excuse for him.

I had nowhere to go. Financially I would have been completely ruined. I had two children with disabilities. And I was scared of the ramifications of leaving him.

When we were together there was physical and psychological violence. Post my leaving him, the only way he could get to me was emotionally and psychologically.

Until you actually look at the indicators of domestic violence and are true to yourself, you are not going to know where to go for help. Your life and your wellbeing and your liberty, being the oxygen mask for your children, means much more than financial fall and disgrace.

My incarceration has taught me the smallest things in life mean so much. Even my children, who get huge birthday presents, say that it's Mum's small arts and crafts that mean the most to them.

So, having had it all, and losing it all, I actually feel safe and rewarded beyond belief for the first time in my life. He said I had all these mental health issues. Now that I'm in a place where I can deal with everything, I realise it wasn't all in my mind. His untruths as an abuser, belong to him and him alone.

Women who have suffered family violence who are incarcerated find that by committing a crime, they are finally provided with a safe haven. They are finally away from their abusers and they have a place to stay and three meals a day.

If we could have more places set up like [REDACTED] for women to be provided with a safe place, without having to commit a crime, we would save more lives.