

Jenny Occleshaw - Submission to Royal Commission into Domestic Violence

Please accept my written submission as I was unable to attend the conferences due to an assault on the 14th of May.

I was a victim of domestic violence for 11 years and like many wives in a similar situation and felt entirely unable to leave the marriage as my husband controlled the finances and became threatening and violent if we (my daughter and I) did not live by his rules. To the outside we were a model family and he was the life and soul of the party to his friends. Inside the family it was a very different story and over the years I suffered numerous broken bones, severe bruising and constant mental torture. He isolated me from all my friends and made life very difficult. He did not get along with either his or my family so I had no where to turn. If I was late getting home from work he would be pacing up and down the road and would frequently ring me up at work to make sure I was where I was supposed to be. Eventually I had saved enough to leave and had rented a flat in my name and arrange to move out when he was at work. It was the most frightening day of my life.

However those eleven years paled into insignificance compared to the next few years when he constantly stalked me, having found out where we lived. He would sit in the car outside our flat and then when I moved, my new house. When I reported this to the police they told me that that this was not a crime. When I asked for a restraining order they told me that this would be provocative and it would be better just to ignore him because until he actually tried to force his way into the house or attacked me there was nothing they could do. So I did nothing. He would ring and hang up or ring and threaten to come in to my workplace and cause havoc or spread malicious lies. Nothing happened but I lived in fear for years. He vandalised my car but because I did not have absolute proof nothing could be done. This campaign was kept up for well over two years after I left him. Two years of sitting out the front of my residence just staring. It takes a toll.

I hope that systems can be put in place so that women can be protected from this type of violence and so that they can feel safe. I still do not really feel safe from this man and I know that it has affected my daughter very badly even though he did not physically assault her. What she has witnessed as a child has had a dreadful impact.

No woman should have to put up with this and I certainly felt I had nowhere to turn. I felt very judged by society, by the police, by my family and I certainly felt guiltily. All of this has stayed with me. Fortunately I have maintained I good relationship with my daughter and consider myself to be a strong person so have been able to move on in my life but naturally it has had an impact on my life and on my relationships.

If there had been somewhere to turn for help and support I would have been able to escape my predicament so much sooner and resurrect a fulfilling and stress free, fear free life.

Jenny Occleshaw