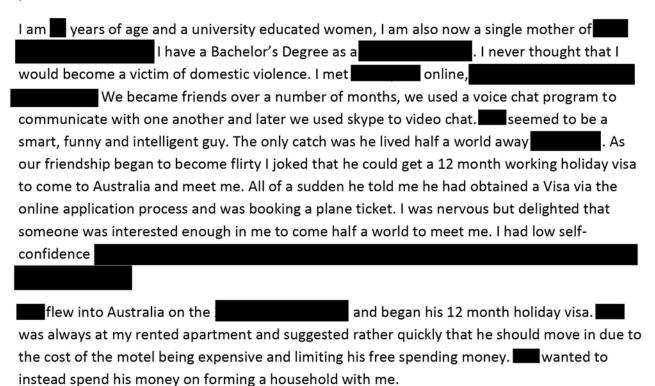


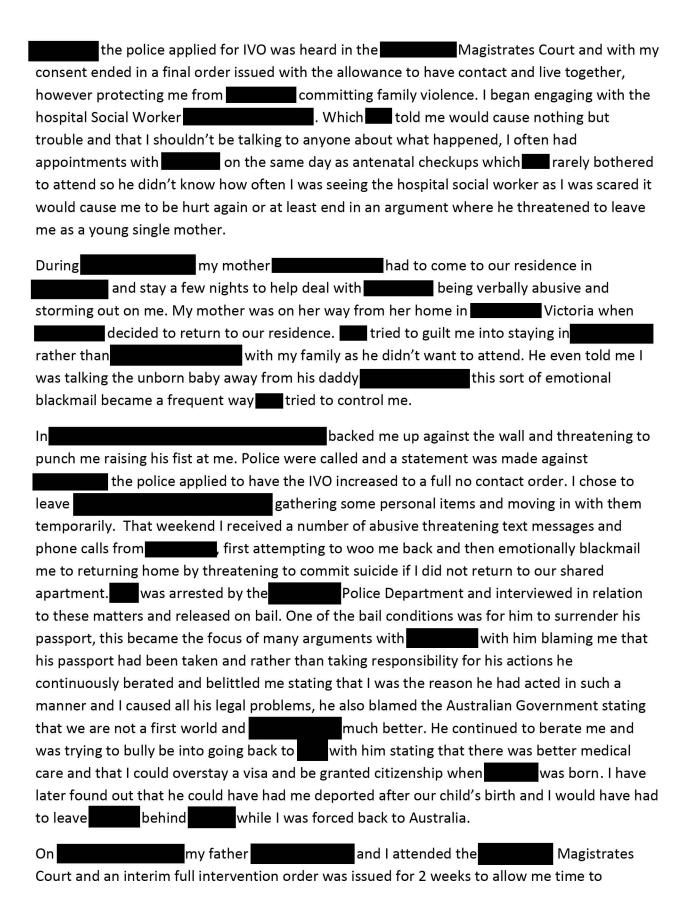
## Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to tell you my story, my story of suffering and torment at the hands of my now expartner and father. I also want to tell you about the torment I am still suffering due to a system that meant to protect us but is instead failing victims of domestic violence.

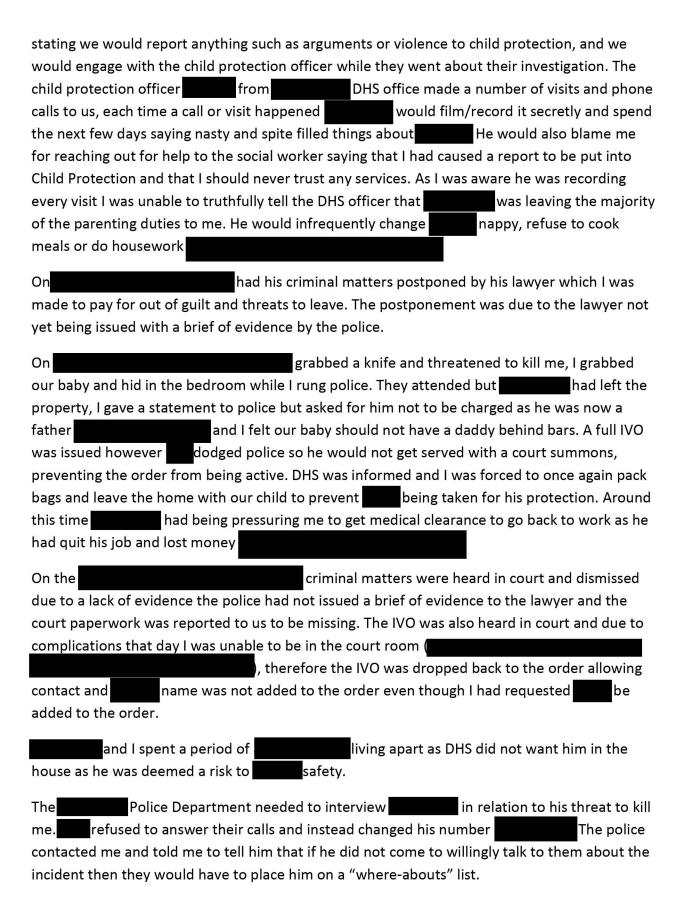
I will begin by giving you the condensed version of my own personal hell so you can understand where I have been and hopefully to give you an inside perspective on how damaging this whole process is.

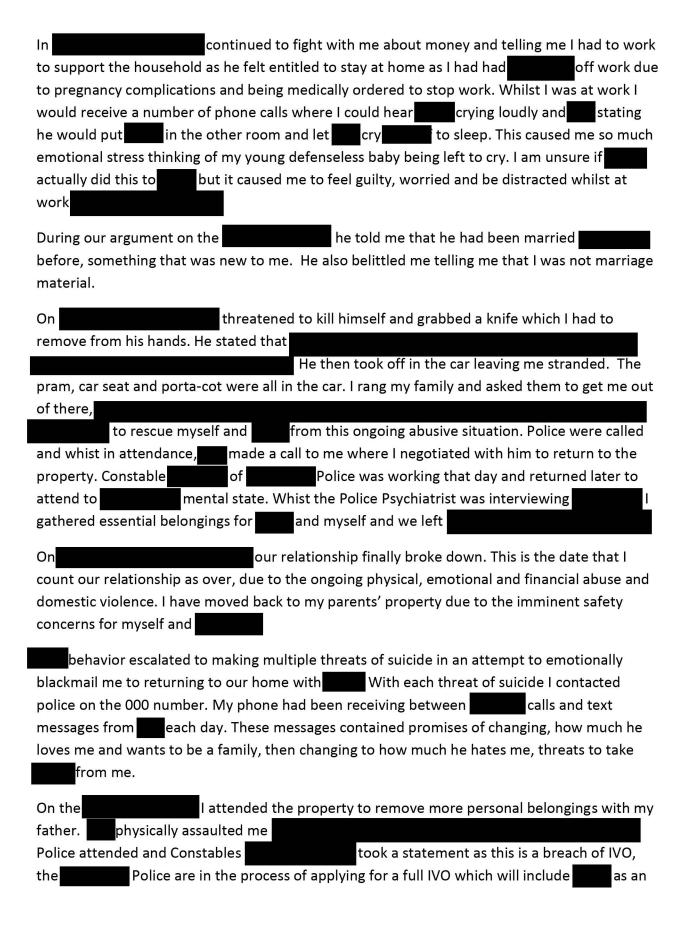


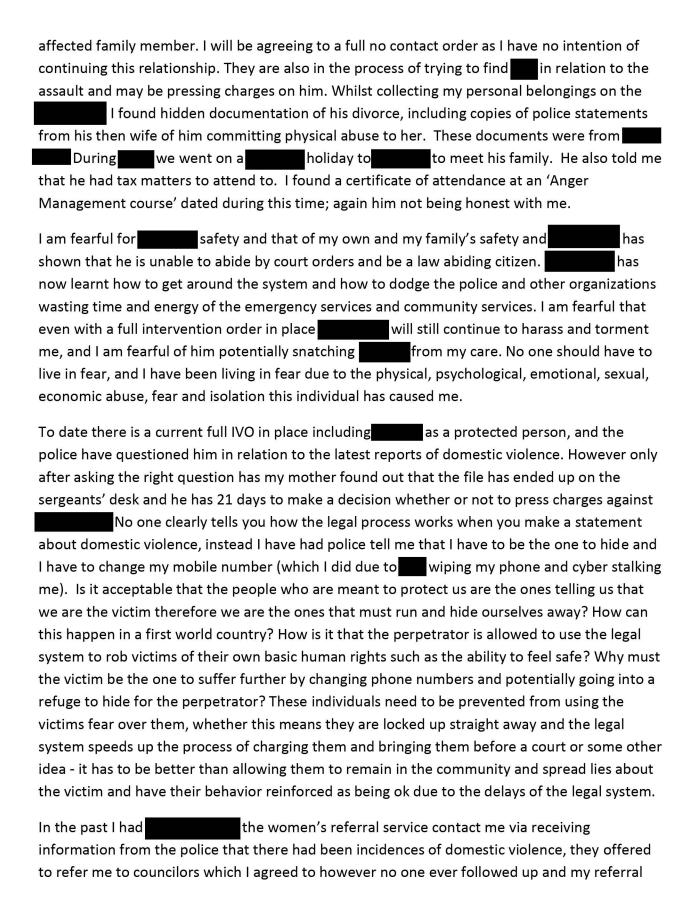




consider what sort of conditions should be made on the order as I was not summons to court due to clerical errors. Two weeks later I chose to have the IVO put back to the partial IVO allowing contact as I was in the third trimester of my pregnancy and felt that needed to work things out for our baby and his ability to remain within Australia. agree to attend couples counselling which begun from I withdrew my previous statements to Police about his domestic violence as was served with charges relating to these offenses and breaches to the IVO. convinced me that withdrawing my statement to police would be best as if he was charged he would not be able to stay in Australia and then he would leave me and our baby when born to fend for ourselves. convinced me that it would never happen again and that I should move back in to our shared apartment. I felt pressured and unsure but being less than a month before my due date for our baby I wanted to have everything sorted and ready for the baby. also convinced me that I was to blame for his actions as I cause him to behave in such a manner, therefore if I wanted the relationship to work I should find him a lawyer and cover the cost associated or I would be left a single mother and be an embarrassment to my family. we attending further couples counselling appointments and when challenged by one of the counsellors for talking over me, walked out in an angry rage leaving me to finish the session, after this refused to continue to see that counsellor. On the criminal matters were brought before the Magistrates Court. no legal aid staff available the matter was adjourned to the By this stage I was heavily pregnant, but continued to blame me for his legal trouble and had me convinced that I was the cause. I was becoming isolated from my friends and family as none of them wanted to be around and they couldn't stand watching me loosing myself to his destructive bullying. On was born, due to a traumatic birth I remained in hospital Although visiting hours opened at 8am until 8pm for partners, chose to stay up all night I felt abandoned and alone when I needed him most he was sleeping. I noted other women's partners arriving right on 8am to see their babies and spend the day with them and there I was alone, tired, in pain and a new first time mum needing support and comfort from but it never came days after birth when I was due to be discharged Department of Human Services - Child Protection came to interview us at the hospital. The had reported the ongoing domestic violence I was suffering Social Worker from and flagged her concerns for to them. We were made to sign undertakings







was lost in the system. People are being lost in the system; there is no quick intervention process for the venerable, even when I was offered the counseling they told me I would have to at least wait a month before I could see someone. This screams that there are not enough resources available.

At times when had slammed the door and stormed out leaving me crying in the apartment I rang the and waiting on hold for over an hour. No one ever answered my call and I was forced to hang up when returned to the apartment out of fear of him finding out that I was trying to reach out for help.

I have had to leave my apartment and a vast number of possessions for my safety and protection. Now this person is still living in there and is refusing to give me back my furniture. Due to my understanding as we were living together for longer than 6 months everything is considered 50% ownership, even though he brought the clothes on his back and a laptop to the relationship, he now has all of my furniture that I worked so hard to buy and build myself up with. I was also told that as I left the rental property and he resides there he now has the say on what I can and can't reclaim, and if I don't agree, I have to take him to court. I am now a single mother how am I meant to have the money to take him to court? As I have also discovered hardly anyone is granted legal aid and a property dispute is not considered urgent court proceedings therefore no legal aid can be sought for this purpose.

I withdrew my immigration sponsorship for partner visa, and received and email of acknowledgement. This email also stated that due to Australian privacy laws I would not be notified of any outcome. This means that I will never know if its deported or allowed to remain in Australia. This is causing me anxiety and fear and I feel that I may never know if I will be able to stop looking over my shoulder and if I will ever feel safe again. My family has made multiple phone calls to immigration attempting to figure out the process with no luck and spending more time on hold or hitting brick walls with people who can't even tell us the general process. There has been numerous hours spent trying to find the answers on the internet too.

Immigration, the police, the courts and other services all work separately, there is no or very little cross communication between these organizations. This has caused me to have to repeat my story multiple times and feel that no one understands what hell I have been subjected to. The slow response from all of these organizations has allowed these perpetrators to become wise to the system, they know how to duck and weave and hide from the police and court matters. They learn how to remain "innocent" in society's eyes as they aren't the one that left their home and community, they are still there and able to spread lies and slander about the women who leave as there is no option left.

There needs to be a regulating Government body to communicate with all of the different systems and services to help victims through the mind field of legal jargon and confusion. This Government body will be the first step in empowering victims to fight back using the correct and just process against their attacker and abusers. There is a huge gap in support for victims in relation to talking to police and getting answers to their questions, immigration matters either as the sponsor or sponsored party, civil, criminal and family court proceedings, and even further support when talking to other countries in relation to their past domestic violence perpetrators. As a victim I feel strongly that there needs to be a nationwide register of these perpetrators and potentially a listing of those who are under investigation for domestic violence and still awaiting court proceedings. I have seen charges been dropped for no reason other than laziness of not providing a brief of evidence and clerical errors, this is unfair and unjust and how can we have this happen? This is not good enough and only reinforces the behavior, allowing them to see how easy it is for charges to be dropped or lost in the system.

I also feel strongly that there needs to be some sort of long term rehabilitation process, however in my situation it seems that the perpetrator already underwent this and in less than 12 months was doing the same again. The system needs to identify those who are first time offenders and have a process of rehabilitating them and teaching them to not act in these violent and abusive ways. However repeat offenders need harsher punishments.

I would like to point out a legal short coming. If I was punched by another person whilst down the street where members of the community can witness this the person attacking me would be arrested on the spot and questioned. They would most likely be charged with criminal charges such as aggravated assault and reckless intent to cause injury. However behind closed doors if the same assault was to occur the police first apply for an IVO and then may or may not take the person into questioning if they are still at the property this occurred at, they would tell the victim that this is firstly a civil matter and criminal charges may occur when reviewed by their Sargent. My experience has shown the lack of concern that the perpetrator has run out of the apartment and is now within the public. It seemed that no real efforts to alert the public that this person was wanted for questioning or could be in the local area. I myself had to once take police to the apartment to give them access to it to serve court orders of the IVO summons as the perpetrator would refuse to answer the door to police and ignore their phone calls if they phoned him.

There is a society stigma towards victims that it is somehow our fault and that we have allowed these things to happen to us. I never asked to be choked, force to have sex, head butted, knives pulled on me, abused, assaulted, stalked and harassed. I never asked for any of these things to happen to me. However I am a victim of domestic violence and society not only places a taboo on this subject but also tells me that because I stayed, I allowed this to happen. I was told that

the magic number is '8'. 8 times a women will leave and come back before she finally breaks free of her abuser. I left and returned times before I finally left or I would be another statistic of another women dead at her partners hands. These statistics are shocking and need to be made public knowledge to help break down the stigma victims' face and allow people to assist victims rather than judge them.

People need to walk in my shoes before they can make such harsh and unfair judgements on a women who loved a man and wanted to raise with dad, a women who stayed because she was scared, isolated and had all of her confidence taken from her. Society shames the victim and it is that shame and embarrassment that caused me to almost end up dead at the hands of the man I loved. That shame and embarrassment almost prevented me from reaching out to my family who has always been there for me, but I had become isolated from them.

This taboo is one of the most damaging things in our current society and we need to empower victims and punish the perpetrator rather than allowing the opposite to happen. This stigma of shame needs to be broken, or more women will stay and more women will die at the hands of their partner.

Help us break the taboo of family/domestic violence

Regards