



From there, Child Protection went to the police. We (my husband and I) were called in to the station, together, by the SOCET unit. I was not expecting the outcome that happened that day. I did not see it coming.

They took [REDACTED] one way and asked me to come in the other direction. At that point I was told that I would be going home on my own. They asked if I had the car keys. They said he was being questioned in relation to what Child Protection had told them (the abuse and the rapes).

At that point I was told they were putting a family violence order against him, because I was not capable of protecting myself. They said words to the effect that, 'If you won't do it, we will.' It was not what I wanted at the time, but in hindsight, I'm grateful. I wish someone had done it years ago when I first spoke about it. I wish someone had stepped in like that a long time ago.

He was questioned. He confessed to everything, because he still believed it was what husbands do. He thought they would feel sorry for him. He fully believed all men did this (he thought people just didn't talk about it). He also blamed my mental health issues as an excuse for his behaviour. Not once did he realise his actions were contributing to the deterioration of my mental health. When you are being raped every four weeks, constantly harassed every night, yelled at, hit, called all sorts of names, you end up with no self-esteem and no confidence as a person.

The police let him out on a family violence order. He continued to breach that order. His justification was, "She can't survive without me." To be honest, I didn't think I could either. That's the nature of family violence. It took me a while to understand how much control he had over my emotions and my ability to cope on my own.

He was referred to the men's behavioural change program at Kildonan. He went twice. He was also asked to see a forensic psychologist.

I refused to make a statement in the hope he would go to the behavioural change program and would change. I was hoping we could see it as a positive thing and that he would realise all the things I have been telling him all these years were true, and that his actions were wrong and had to stop. Finally, I thought someone else would back up what I had been telling him. All I ever wanted was for him to get help and to stop.

The day he told Kildonan where to stick their program, he called me to abuse me, and that was the day I made the statement to police. A few days after the statement, he was arrested and charged and released on bail. I didn't hear from him for a couple of weeks until we had to go to the Children's Court for the supervision order with DHS. Unfortunately at the Courts they can't keep you separate. For the whole day we had to sit in the hall and try not to look at him (my oldest son had to be there, but my youngest son was still under 10). It was very hard being in the same corridor waiting. Amazingly, the Courts allowed him to fight what was happening. He was allowed to contest the intervention order even though he was charged and on bail. He was allowed to contest the supervision orders with DHS. They gave him supervised access after he made suicide threats. He didn't understand that you couldn't make threats about your own life, and then a few days later apologise. It showed a pattern of instability. One second he'd be angry, then when there repercussions he'd be sorry. He was still allowed to contest supervised access, even though there was no chance of him winning. I felt it was crazy. I wasted so many hours in court. Lawyers' time, court resources, legal aid resources were all ridiculously wasted during these processes.

Eventually I contacted the police to let them know he was breaching the order again, and his bail. He was arrested and remanded into custody and has been there ever since.

He plead guilty to all of the charges. He's currently waiting to be sentenced.

I have gotten no representation whatsoever.

The intervention order was made by the police. In the criminal matter, I was represented by the Police. In the Children's Court there was no representation for me because I wasn't contesting what DHS was asking for. He was given Legal Aid to contest different orders, including the family violence order and the child supervision order. That made things very hard. It also meant that every small court date, I had to attend. It also meant I had to liaise with his lawyers, in person, not knowing what I'm doing. I had to liaise with my children's lawyers (they were given lawyers through Legal Aid, but I wasn't). At the Children's Court I also had to say that I did not want to see him on video link. I was assured it wouldn't happen, but it did. I had to sit up the front with all the other lawyers, which was very intimidating.

His lawyers were very abrupt and very rude, as if I was an idiot. His Legal Aid lawyer said, "█ wants you to know he really loves you". I was dumbfounded. I told the Police. They didn't breach him, but they contacted him. I was amazed at the ways in which "no contact" can be broken in so many ways.

█ wanted me to retract my statement. He even asked the kids that in his supervised access.

My youngest child has just been diagnosed with severe depression. There are no services that either Child Protection or myself have been able to find to support the children. Berry Street and CPS are so overwhelmed with the amount of people they see. The support is not available. I was able to get counselling through CASA, but they do not have kids counselling. CASA has gone well over their sixteen week support. Their support has been amazing.

### ***Gaps and downfalls***

When █ was removed from the house it took eight weeks to get someone to come in and do something as basic as give me a shower. They removed my carer but didn't put anything in place to back that up. For eight weeks, all I wanted was for my husband to come home. I was struggling to look after my kids. If I didn't have my oldest son, it would have been a lot worse. But it's not my son's job to give me a shower. I didn't want him to do that.

When he was removed, they should have asked me what my physical needs were. The Disability and Family Violence fund through DHS took eight weeks to be initiated. It should have happened straight away.

I think mandatory reporting, no matter the person's age, should be implemented, across the healthcare field. They should have a duty of care to the patient and be compelled to report it. If that had of happened, this would have stopped 3, 4, or 5 years ago.

The reason behind mental health professionals not reporting it is because my actions were not impacting on anyone, so it was not their job to take action. Because it was my husband raping me, no one was under any obligation to help me. Nobody did anything.

When I was an inpatient at the █ we had family therapy with █ Just the two of us. The issue of the rapes came out. When the therapist didn't agree with what █ was saying, █ got aggressive and the session was shut down and he was asked to leave. I was offered help to leave my marriage. But it was the same thing, I couldn't leave my

children. Where would I go? What money would I go with? How do I tell my family? So, of course, I said no. If it had of been reported, that's two years I would have saved living with this. It shouldn't have taken a suicide attempt for someone to finally step in and stop it. The only way I would have stopped it is by me killing myself or him killing me. You start to believe the things that you are told – that you are stupid, that you are incapable of looking after yourself and that you need that person to survive. You hear it often enough, you are petrified to leave. I believed it. I didn't think I could look after myself.

Maybe if there were better disability services while we were together, rather than the responsibility being on my partner to be a carer, I would have felt more confident to leave earlier. I was regularly told, "We can't provide that, your husband can do it." That puts a lot of pressure on any relationship. Our relationship became one of invalid and carer.

There's a lot of stigma involved with the kind of violence that was happening, especially with the sexual assault. No one wants to talk about that. Not many people understand it. A friend asked whether it was sex games gone wrong. Others blamed me for [REDACTED]'s actions: "You've been in hospital. You've got a mental health problem". Or, "You pushed him to do this". It's almost like it was ok because I suffer with mental illness. It made his actions understandable. Justifiable.

The fact we were both disabled also presented issues. [REDACTED], as a [REDACTED], was constantly put on an 'inspiration pedestal'. He was seen as an amazing person [REDACTED]. There was pressure to live up to that in people's eyes.

It would have been helpful for the kids to have emergency counselling. One moment they had a dad, the next he was gone. It was very hard on them. My youngest blames himself because he spoke to Child Protection. He thought he got his Dad into trouble. To this day he wants his dad to come home. Dealing with my own issues, while hearing my child cry, "I want Daddy to come home" is hard. My ten year old is having extreme mood swings. The life he knew was all of a sudden gone.

Because of the nature of the offences, my husband is not allowed any visitors under 18 years of age. The prison won't allow it. For the children, it is like their father has died. It is like he is dead. They are grieving for the loss of the family; they are grieving for the loss of their Dad. They don't know how to tell their friends that their Dad is in prison. They needed and still do need counselling. They should have had it in the beginning when they were brought home by Child Protection.

Berry Street has a six month waitlist for kids counselling. After nine months, he has finally been referred to [REDACTED].

And for my 17 year old, there is nothing. He has been referred to Headspace, but there is a waitlist.

My eldest is now 17 (he was 16 at the time). My youngest is 10. My children had their own lawyers. I wasn't able to be in the room. My oldest has a learning delay, and I wanted to explain things so that he could understand, but I wasn't allowed.

We have had good workers at Child Protection. I was worried about my mental health issues causing trouble, but they have been very supportive. Even with a hospital admission for my anorexia, they have been supportive.

We now have monthly Care Team meetings which include Child Protection, DHS, a disability support worker, the Principal from the kids' school, myself and one of my outreach workers.

I have had very little privacy. Everything about my life, everyone knows. It is placed in reports. But because [REDACTED] is in prison, his privacy is fully protected.

He is being sentenced in three weeks. I am told he will get a minimum two years on top of what he has already served, and then a six year CCO.

I found the book "Real Rape, Real Pain" very helpful. It explains the hurdles and the way society justifies it. I am not the only one who has come up against these same things. I recommend it to the Commission. ("Real Rape, Real Pain: Help for Women Sexually Assaulted by Male Partners" by Patricia Easteal and Louise McOrmond-Plummer, published by Hybrid Publishers, Melbourne, 2006.)