



Royal Commission into Family Violence

Via online submission

INTER-GENERATIONAL Family Violence and MISGUIDED DE-FUNDING OF EARLY ANGLICARE PROGRAMS

I write as a witness to multi-generational abuse. My hope is that in writing my story that the decision to de-fund three Anglicare programs which I accessed to life-changing effect may be re-visited.

MY BACKGROUND

Firstly, I was sexually and emotionally abused during childhood when I also suffered the loss of my mother to cancer - however there were no supports in for children in the 1980s.

Secondly, there was physical violence in marriage, and after leaving permanently (on third attempt ■ years ago), I witnessed criminal damage and ongoing threats of harm after separation and I took out 5 intervention orders in ■ years. Twice the father of my children was convicted (I believe) of breaching an intervention order but I'm not sure because police did not inform me – perhaps they were unable to by privacy laws. There were also “several” convictions for the perpetrator leaving children unattended while in a gambling venue of which I was unaware until police action in ■. Police action initiated by me in ■ evaporated when the perpetrator was remanded (I believe) ■

Earlier ■ I again approached the magistrates' court to obtain an intervention order – I was this time granted an ■ year intervention order.

Thirdly, I am on the road to recovery from [REDACTED] years of violence with one of my children, I'll call 'L' now aged [REDACTED], who no longer lives with me full-time.

SERVICES ACCESSED IN PAST [REDACTED] YEARS

As a graduate and former public servant I have been perhaps better placed than many women to access community supports. When I look back on all the community support I've accessed (described briefly below), the cost must be if it could be calculated. My hope is that all this community effort will result in dysfunctionality stopping; that my children will not require such interventions when they are parents. If I can be of any assistance to the Royal Commission to elaborate what has worked and what has not, I should be very happy to be called on to discuss my experiences.

But I feel it is important to describe and for the most part commend the support in the past [REDACTED] years from "the system".

- Eastern Access Community Health (EACH) Gamblers Help counselling
- EACH parenting support for vulnerable mothers called "Lunch At One" and "Motherspace"
- Anglicare's Kids In Care which arranged respite carers over most of the past 8 years
- Anglicare, Integrated Family Services (IFS), who visited me at home at different time for periods of 3 to 12 months;
- [REDACTED] principal, [REDACTED], and chaplains, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] for going above and beyond, even visiting at my home to support my family; and health department course run at the School called "Kool Kids, Positive Parents"
- Department of Education, social worker, [REDACTED] who supported L for over 2 years, long after the usual amount of 6 months engagement;
- Anglicare's art therapy for women who have left violence situations;
- Victoria Police were hit and miss with helpfulness ten years ago but have improved vastly in consistency overall in my experience. Worthy of special mention is [REDACTED] who, when I had been already been "in the system" five years and feeling thoroughly degraded by yet another violent situation, exceeded all expectations of "duty of care" by coming back off leave to attend my hearing way out in [REDACTED]. The effect of his prompt and respectful treatment was I was restored to positive functioning within days, instead of being dragged down by judgement expressed by police in the past. In more recent years around L's violence, follow-up from police family liaison who, in the past couple of years referred my family helpfully to support services;

- ██████████ Magistrates Court where intervention orders are now much better explained to both the victim and the perpetrator in 2015 than back in ██████████ when I obtained my first of 5 or 6 intervention orders. I was recently given an ██████████ year intervention order on the basis of the history of several one year orders;
- Victim Support which paid for my locks to be changed after an incident of violence in ██████████
- Child Protection, while never “welcome” performed their role fairly on maybe three or four time they have been involved. This includes a fair and helpful response when I rang them ██████████
██████████
- Children and Youth Mental Health Services (CYMHS), who engaged with myself, the father of my children and all the children;
- Family First, a welfare assessment organised by Child Protection to intensively work with my family to help us get to the bottom of my eldest child’s violence. Their trauma-informed practice was life-changing and I commend ██████████
██████████ from that service;
- Anglicare/Parentzone whose support groups and parenting courses have helped immeasurably. I particularly commend ██████████ who has continued to support me from time to time outside of the group and parenting courses – and I strongly advocate for the raising the profile of the course called “Breaking The Cycle” – again a life-changing intervention.
- Anglicare’s support programs for socially-disadvantaged boys (read boys with no Dad/problematic Dad involved) called “Peaceful Warriors” and “Boys Will Be Men”

MOVING ON FROM VIOLENCE

Recently I have begun to feel I have truly “moved on” – or perhaps “moved through” is a better way to describe where I am at a “new normal”. I suppose the key thing is that the perpetrator has finally shown his true colours - his threats to “take the kids” no longer frighten because there is now a clear trail of evidence. I finally feel able to apply for jobs and get off welfare.

However, as a victim of inter-generational family violence, my chief concern is advocate against what I consider to be short-sighted de-funding of the following programs:

- Anglicare art therapy for women who have left violence: I credit this program as giving me my body and my life back. Because of it I was lifted from a life lived in “concrete boots” to being ready and able to take my place in the world.

- Anglicare's "Kids In Care" respite service: I credit this service with enabling me to keep my children at home with me rather than them going into foster care - which was on the cards during the Black Saturday bushfire period when I experienced a breakdown after having been stalked and assaulted by the perpetrator [REDACTED].
[REDACTED] If respite is de-funded we run the risk of vulnerable mothers being unable to cope with traumatised children, leading to dysfunctionality being handed down to the next generation. My children were lucky that I knew enough about "the system" to trust that, despite having [REDACTED] the system would not be seeking to punish me but to increase the supports so I could continue to raise my children. Also, my [REDACTED] has been going to the same wonderful family for [REDACTED] years and these beautiful people have adopted my whole family into their lives.
- Anglicare's "Peaceful Warriors and "Boys Will Be Men (BWBM)" De-funding this program is the saddest of all for me. Before L did BWBM he had so little experience of men that he could not look them in the face. Having completed the BWMB program, the same team would invite past participants to two activities each school holidays to enable the boys to keep a connection going. I was looking forward to L joining in, when he gets older, to help other kids in the program. A hugely beneficial network for naughty boys-turned-helpers is about to be lost in the [REDACTED] with the de-funding of BWBM.

Thank you for taking the time to read my submission.

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]

22 May 2015