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My submission to the Royal Commission Family Violence:

The due date for all submissions is 29 May 2015.
The preferred method of receipt is via our website
www.rcfv.com.au
Followed by email at
enquiries@rcfv.com.au
and then post at PO Box 535, Flinders Lane VIC 8009.

Dear Sir / Madam

I have read through the RCFV Issues Paper and thank you for giving me the opportunity for making a Submission.

I would like to share with you my story of Family Violence and how I believe the legal system let me down.

As a background: My second marriage, we both come from Jewish backgrounds, (we were together for █ years, ██████████ and married for █ years) was marred by:

- Economic abuse – in the approx. █ years we lived together I cannot remember a time that I did not have to ask for money to help pay the bills. At that stage I did not know there was such a thing as economic abuse. I just thought this guy is really tight. I once built up the courage to tell him that it was humiliating for me to always ask for money but nothing changed.
- Psychological abuse - my ex-husband was a practicing ██████████ ██████████ He had all the language at his disposal to make our conversations regarding the difficulties our marriage was experiencing sound as though I was the one who did not know about active listening skills. He would often correct or misinterpret things I was saying. Often I felt disempowered and belittled. I did not have his educational qualifications. I often apologized for saying the wrong thing and for being wrong. We had couple counselling and saw two different people without success.
- Emotional abuse – the lack of empathy and openness that a healthy relationship requires to succeed.
- Sexual abuse- towards the end of our marriage he was coming to bed later and later until one night I got up and found him masturbating to an online pornographic site and I also caught him on a few occasions masturbating with pornographic magazines. (It wasn't till we separated that a counsellor told me that could be viewed as sexual abuse.)

Physical abuse – on the [REDACTED] My ex always told me I had to voice my thoughts on this day I finally spoke up. I told him how he had verbally humiliated me in front of his son. I was upset. The ‘conversation’ escalated into a yelling match with him talking over me and not giving me a chance to speak. He stormed out of the house. I went after him and yelled at him to go away, I had had enough and slammed the back door shut and locked it. He stormed back furious, red in the face. I decided it would be best to let him back into the house. When I unlocked the door, I realised I didn’t want him in my house (he had moved into my family home) and I pushed him in the chest. I was terrified by this man, he was so angry, so red in the face, I was terrified. I had never been so frightened in my life.

When he realised I did not want him in the house and he wanted to come in he lashed out with 3 punches to my right arm. I screamed and screamed, trembling and then I backed off. I thought if there were to be a 4th punch it would land on my face, and I would fall back onto a glass table.

He stormed out of the house.

I rang my counsellor and an ex neighbour. They spoke to me but there was no follow up. I didn’t know what to do. I phoned my ex-husband apologizing and taking the blame for upsetting him. I implored him to come home. Two days later he came home. My arm bruised up and I took photos.

For [REDACTED] months I became totally compliant. Everything he asked for I said ‘yes’ to. I went to work but went into a shell and quietly had a nervous breakdown. Not once in the [REDACTED] months did he see me naked, I slept on the edge of the bed, I lived in fear of making him angry. He later told to a friend that our marriage had never been better.

In [REDACTED] I broke down after somebody said something to me. I saw a solicitor and got advice regarding my home and the best way to get him out. At the beginning of [REDACTED] in the presence of my son, then [REDACTED] old, I told my husband our marriage was over and gave him [REDACTED] days to leave. He became furious. I wanted to phone the police, my son stopped me from doing so.

I had sought counselling from [REDACTED]. We discussed Intervention Orders. I said I did not believe he would assault me again. My counsellor became ill, there was no follow up or alternative counsellor provided. I was in limbo.

A few times during those [REDACTED] days my ex wanted to speak to me, but I was broken, there was no clarity in my head. He moved out of our bedroom into a spare room.

Then on the [REDACTED] I couldn't sleep and early in the morning wanted to speak to him. There was no conversation. All he could say was 'I know my rights' and I responded by saying, 'I know my rights as well and domestic violence is a crime.'

I told my son I was okay, pretending to go to work. I wandered the streets of [REDACTED], Victoria. At [REDACTED] on the [REDACTED] I took my camera and had the photos developed which showed the bruising on my arm.

[REDACTED] - In a state of emotional, psychological distress, with no clarity of thought, no real comprehension of what I was doing I drove to [REDACTED] Police Station. I walked in the station and saw Constable [REDACTED] I think it was her first day on the job.

I told the Constable that I had photos of the bruising. I was asked if I wanted to make a statement. I said I was unsure. I was ushered into an interview room. The Constable accompanied by another person came in. I was, I truly believe pressured into making a Statement. The time came to sign it, I was unsure. I knew I was not psychologically well. I NEEDED MEDICAL HELP ... NONE WAS OFFERED.

The duty Sergeant came in. He towered over me and more pressure was put onto me to sign the Statement. He asked if the Statement was true, I said 'yes'. He went on to say that if I didn't sign there would be consequences for me and also that the Police would go to my house anyway and arrest my husband.

I was there for what seemed like hours and eventually signed the document. I was so tired and confused.

I was crushed, broken, lost.

A friend took me in and later my brother took me in. My son and daughter were totally distraught.

Later that day I phoned the Salvation Army and told them what I had done and it was arranged for me to be accompanied by my son to go back to [REDACTED] Police Station and make a Statement to revoke my previous Statement. I did not want my marriage to end. I loved my husband, I truly wanted us to reconcile.

[REDACTED] – accompanied by my son we went to [REDACTED] Police Station. I made a Statement withdrawing my complaint. I was told that the Police would now take up the case as there was evidence of the assault.

██████ – ████████ Police took my ex to the ████████ Magistrates Court and had a full Intervention Order invoked.

██████ – I went back to the ████████ Magistrates Court and had the Intervention Order revoked.

Following the hearing I made 2 complaints:

1. Against the presiding Judge. (Sorry my letter to ████████ and his response have gone missing.) **During the brief hearing the Magistrate did not once look at me, call me by my name or ask me, 'if I was certain I wanted to go ahead with the revocation of the Order'.**
 - ████████ received a copy of the audio recording of the hearing and acknowledged that my letter to him was correct. An apology was given.
2. I spoke to the Legal Services Commissioner and was allocated a Case Worker. I made a complaint about my ex-husband's Barrister. The Barrister stood over me when I was speaking to the Police Prosecutor and also, in my view, acted inappropriately at the end of the Hearing.
 - **After investigation a letter from the Legal Services Commission was sent to me where the Barrister acknowledged that he may have acted inappropriately, but also saying that I got what I wanted e.g. the revocation on the Intervention Order.**

In Summary:

1. Women need proper support when they enter a police station. It was obvious that I was in a very poor state of mental health, totally confused. I was not in a condition to make a Statement. I was in desperate need for medical assistance.
2. I felt bullied and intimidated at ████████ Police Station.
3. I did not have the voice to ask for help.

My marriage ended, I wanted so much to reconcile our differences. As previously mentioned we both come from a Jewish background and I believed that our marriage which was sanctified in the eyes of God was precious.

I thought with the revocation of the Intervention Order my ex would start speaking to me. Instead he told me that I had betrayed him and a friend of his told me that I had humiliated him.

I felt guilty and blamed myself for our marriage breakdown. He has only spoken to me twice since that day, on both occasions asking for a divorce. Life was in limbo

until early [REDACTED] when I applied for a divorce and paid all the legal costs. He got his freedom.

Time and time again I tried to contact him, birthdays, anniversaries and at other times without success. Not once did he respond. I gave up.

My lesson: He did not go to any behaviour changing programs. He has no idea how those 3 punches or his behaviour affected my life.

My two adult children: My son, now [REDACTED] old, has had no male role models. His anger towards my ex has been difficult. He has sought help from the Men's Help line. I cannot mention my ex to him.

My daughter, now [REDACTED] old. What happened shattered her. She went into herself and is only now starting to open up and speak. (This is [REDACTED] years later.)

Myself: Last year I finally received some really good counselling through the Mental Health Care plan. I had 10 sessions with a Clinical Psychologist and my life is back on track.

Terror is a horrible thing. Family violence is abhorrent. I would never have thought that my [REDACTED] husband had it in him to lash out and hurt me so much.

I could hide the emotional, economic, psychological abuse but when it became physical ... it was the last straw.

For so long I blamed myself. Now I know it wasn't about me at all it was all about the state of his mental health.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity of writing this submission. It may help in a small way, but more importantly it has given me a venue for finally telling you about the Police system which let me down so badly when I needed medical assistance.

[REDACTED]