

My name is [REDACTED] and I'm currently [REDACTED] years old and I have a beautiful [REDACTED] who is nearly [REDACTED]. I work part-time at [REDACTED], I'm a delegate, a white ribbon ambassador for violence against woman and I have just begun studying again for the first time in [REDACTED] years.

I have been I have been suffering with domestic violence since I was a child. I thought it was normal and I thought everyone's parents must fight like mine but no one just really talked about it; but then the violence became directed towards me when I was [REDACTED] and I started to realize that this behaviour is not normal and does not happen in every family home. I escaped when I was [REDACTED] leaving with nothing but the clothes on my back and begun rebuilding my life with my partner.

Unfortunately my partner that I loved, trusted, and thought was my soul mate ended up also becoming my next abuser, who I went on to have a child with and would then later marry, all the while thinking that I could change him and repeating the constant cycle which is family violence.

To the outside world I am a confident woman/feminist/activists that would stand up to anyone if I believed they were being unjust, but yet a home behind closed doors there would be occasions where I thought I would actually be the next statics or [REDACTED] would witness [REDACTED] mother being killed by the hands of [REDACTED] father.

Because of who I was this made me very ashamed, embarrassed and began to feel like a failure that I could defend other woman in similar situations but couldn't stand up for myself or was to scared of being alone that I would rather be strangled, punched, head butted, pinned down, cheated on and humiliated.

I had tried to separate a number of times from partner but time each time the violence seem to become worse, but if I forgave him and acceptable his apologies and flowers and gifts then the abuse would stop and he would love me, us again and it would all be okay..... Until it wasn't again.

Finally I found the strength to separate again in [REDACTED] last year but after another child exchange and another hurl of abuse in front [REDACTED] I was terrified that he would hurt me again so I went to the police station only to find him waiting there for me, I won't go into details but at the end of the night the police believed me and the my ex-partner was arrested and full temporary orders taken against my ex-husband to keep [REDACTED] and I safe. I had to attend court the very next day but I was also meant to commence a very important business trip that we had been planning for months, thank goodness my workplace has a family violence clause that they enabled for me immediately with no judgment, no probing questions and was I not made to feel guilty at all.

At the intervention hearing the police said we would be kept in separate rooms and that I wouldn't have to see him as I was terrified, but they were wrong he sat across from me with his mates and laughed and joked and starred me down the whole time while we waited, it was awful I just wanted to runaway I was so scared what would happen afterwards I nearly didn't go into that courtroom.

Full orders were taken out against him and he was required to hand back his weapons, I knew how angry this would make him, [REDACTED]

The physical violence had stopped but now the physiological and emotional would start. At supervised visits at [REDACTED]'s he would bring his [REDACTED] to intimidate me, one time my ex walked right up to me and yelled at me [REDACTED] standing in front me and his mother had to tell him to come sit down (again reported but not a clear breach) he would harass me with texts about our child and frighten me with nasty emails and letters from lawyers demanding to change the details on the order, demanding me to be without [REDACTED] for Christmas, his [REDACTED] would sit outside my house, I would report it but was told he was visiting someone in the other units, he also bought his new girlfriend and her family around to help him take mutual possession from our house and the police said to me, let him take them there just possession's let him think his won and hopefully he will leave you alone, again I just felt violated and so powerless and our poor [REDACTED] witnessing all of this.

A few weeks later I received a phone call from the firearms department asking my opinion of my ex-husband applying to get his guns back and do I consider him to be a risk and dangerous, I paused and asked .... Will my ex-husband know my answers? The man said.... 'oh I think so .....why does that matter?' I said because I'm scared that will get angry at me if I tell the truth' he then replied ....well why are you scared of him? I was so upset I couldn't get my words to come out and this man had clearly no idea how to deal with a victim as he then replied with, well I don't think you should let fear motivate your answers." I didn't know how to respond to this so he went on to say 'a police officer has also put his opinion forward in an email to me stating that he believes your ex is too angry and it would put you at risk if that helps? Thinking of [REDACTED], knowing I needed to be brave I said fine, then all you really need to know is that I'm terrified of him and yes I would stand up in court if I really had too.'

Then one of the scariest and sleepless nights was about [REDACTED] weeks later when a judge deemed my ex-husband a non prohibited person and allowed him to have his guns back [REDACTED]

I was terrified and shaking and having a panic attack at the police station that night and was turned away and told it was not a clear breach of threatening me via social media, at this point I felt powerless. I was so emotionally exhausted and my poor [REDACTED] seeing [REDACTED] mother fall apart with fear and sleeping with one eye open and jumping at every little sound throughout the night was taking its toll on both of us.

Almost [REDACTED] months on and my ex-husband still torments me, by reporting me to centre link and stopping my payments, reporting me to child protection services, not paying child support, popping up and watching me at shopping centres and, telling anyone who will listen that he is going for full

custody and still sending nasty manipulative messages, this will be a constant ongoing battle for me and [REDACTED] and I'm very frightened as he is relentless at trying to upset me and scare me what he will do when the order runs out in a few months and with no clear reported breaches I might not be able to get the order extended.

but I am also lucky, my workplace has been amazing throughout this whole ordeal they never questioned me, or made me feel guilty instead they showed me compassion, empathy and respected my privacy and always reassured me that this would have no affect on my working career and if there was anything they could do to support me all I had to do was let them know. I have had to attend lawyers, mediation [REDACTED] times, court and intense family violence counselling and work have supported me though all of this, and to be able to come to work and feel safe and not judged and not worrying if I will loose my job then stress about how would I support [REDACTED] was such a weight lifted of my shoulders and allowed me to rebuild my life and provide a safe environment free from violence for [REDACTED] to grow up and now hopefully we have broken the cycle.

I'm happy to be contacted and talk about my submission and would be willing to speak at the commission if required.

Thank you for reading my story and I hope I have been of some help.

[REDACTED]