

Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence

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PART 1 - PUBLIC

I didn't realise for a long time, looking back in hindsight, I experienced family violence from an early age – mental, emotional verbal violence. Which I dismissed completely as violence, I didn't even, I thought my mum was just mean.

My dad wasn't the same in terms of the way my mum was but just sat back and did nothing he never intervened. I had incredibly low self-esteem growing up, and then when I when I was old enough to get into relationships, the first person I ever properly went out with was violent and that became the pattern of relationships. I was [REDACTED] years old. In that first relationship, he was really nice at the start, charming as all violent men that I have ever known and it slowly became, he was really controlling about who I would see and then would accuse me of sleeping with, it could be a person in a shop who I was nice too then we'd get out of the shop and he'd accuse me of sleeping with him. When I met him he was a heroin addict but I didn't know it. We were going out, we'd go to [REDACTED] because he said he had to pay someone back. Then he'd come back off his face, he then admitted he was a heroin addict.

I was a messed up kid, my mum was fanatically religious – she used violence and religion as a means of control.

When I found out that was actually what he was doing I was like, wanna be in on it, I wanna try it. I thought this is shit after one hit and he'd taken most of the gear, he went back and got more, I paid for it. I thought it was the best thing in the world, it took all that stuff away as I was a really depressed kid. From that moment on I became a heroin addict, it was that quick, I became a heroin addict. I was using every day. He used to always constantly use behind my back and steal money from me and even when I had a job, he would steal my savings that I was saving for us to get off the gear. He broke into my friend's house and stole \$[REDACTED] off her and blamed it on me. It was mostly control his violence, I wasn't allowed to speak to anyone, unless it was girls, but he needed to be included. If I shared a laugh with her he would take that as me laughing at him and I'd cop it from him. Right from the beginning, he used to have sex with me when I didn't want it, I'd say no no no and he'd hold me down and do it or I would wake up and he was having sex with me. I didn't realise this was violence until years and years later. I thought it was just normal. Whenever I'd refuse and say no he'd put me down so much, he made me feel so inadequate, that there was something properly wrong with me either I was crazy – you need to see a doctor there is something wrong with you. And he wanted sex with me all the time. Then it became physical, I mean I know it was physical but... about [REDACTED] months into the relationship, he'd throw me against walls, throw me to the ground, kicking me, dragging me around by the hair while kicking me, calling me worthless, you're a piece of shit. Any money I had went towards him and any money he had went to him.

I knew that his dad was beating up his mum. I saw her body, scared across her neck – that was what I thought was violence, it had to be that extreme, I thought he didn't cut my throat so that's not violence. There were plenty of times the cops were called by neighbours. He would say to them "you

know mate she's a fucking nutcase". He used to gaslight me – he would go outside and he'd whisper pretending to be her, in times when I was hanging out there, I was still really depressed at this time. He would use words my mum would say to me – I use to think it was my mum talking to me. He'd move things and say "no it has always been there". He would do things on purpose to show that I was crazy. Then the police would come and he would tell them things like "she thinks her mum is talking to her and her mum is dead". It really made feel like I was crazy. It made me depend on him even more, if I'm crazy then I should listen to what he would say. There was one time he threw me against the shed and my brothers happened to be in the other house and they came and took him by the neck, but I had hidden it all completely from them because "he's gonna change" and because his dad had been so violent, he was a by-product, and he was doing well. I honestly believe now that he purposely got me on heroin – he'd go to [REDACTED] and come back all off his face and I would think how come he gets relief from the world and I don't. I didn't give a fuck about society. He ended up sleeping with one of my best friends and I fell out with her and blamed her at the time and it was definitely from him. Nothing was ever his fault. He just constantly told lies even to the extent that I would ask what the weather was like outside and he would say it's raining when it was sunny. He had a sister, and she was kind of like a mother figure to him and a best friend growing up – their relationship was weird. There were heaps of times, she was heaps older than me – she was about [REDACTED] when I was that age ([REDACTED]) and would get into punch ons, they worked together, she'd rip me off, then he'd rip her off. I was nuts, I was crazy by this relationship. After this relationship. I ended up in the [REDACTED] Crisis Centre. I started using speed a couple of years after starting heroin. There was one night that they were ripping me off.

They found me outside [REDACTED] police station in a fight with another woman – they took me to the psych ward.. He had kicked me out of the house, so I had nowhere to go, that's what happened. That was a common thing, I would sleep outside, I would find rags wrap myself up and just sit there until he let me back in, but this time, because I was in psychosis... I tried to escape from the psych ward. I then went back to him, the amount of times I went back to him I wouldn't be able to count. I really think people should take this into account, is a problem with services now. I understand they are over worked, if a woman returns to her husband and she continues to cop it, they should continue to work with her, not just drop her. My doctor had told me to leave him numerous times, he'd seen bruises, and I would say I'd walked into a door. We would always go to the doctor together. I'm not a violent person and he showed me these knives with blood on them. I ended up in [REDACTED] Crisis centre after the police got involved. It was there that another woman introduced me to prostitution and basically sold me to this guy. She was older than me and said I know how you can make money. A guy turned up, and she said she'd pay half now and half later. But I'd missed the curfew and I was locked out and she ripped me off. It was then that I realised that [REDACTED] was a piece of shit and that he didn't love me but he did but he didn't. I ended up being locked out of the crisis centre, as a girl without a man on the streets, you can't be on your own, you'll be raped or your money stolen and even if you've got no money they'll steal your stuff.

I went from violent relationship to violent relationship. I went to [REDACTED] to an agency and they send you to be a bar tender and they can send you to any place and I got this small country town [REDACTED] out of [REDACTED] and that's where I met [REDACTED] and he was lovely and he was quite a bit older than me and he would always tell me how great I was and how wonderful. This is after I went to rehab and that's where I learnt what violence was. [REDACTED], they were great. I went to that rehab [REDACTED] times and spent altogether [REDACTED] years there – it was residential. I was in rehab from the age of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. At [REDACTED], that was when I finally got it, the last time. I left there when I was [REDACTED]. But in there was where I learnt

about everything, I wish everyone had the chance to go to rehab, it teaches you so much. That's where I learnt that to wake up to him having sex with me was rape. I was so reluctant to hear that – no it's not – because that was against my values and that would mean I'd have to act on it. There was one relationship in between – it was violent emotionally, he was probably the nicest. [REDACTED] was the scariest, he was with the [REDACTED] when the [REDACTED] were big. He was a charmer. I planned to go straight up the west coast, he persuaded me to go to [REDACTED]. I planned to travel all around Australia, but [REDACTED] persuaded me to go to [REDACTED]. He was yelling at me down the phone, all these warning signs going through my head and I totally ignored it, I remember exactly where I was, he was accusing me of sleeping with all the towns folk. The warning bells were going off but I ignored them, he said he was drunk. So I went to [REDACTED] and pretty much within a week, he was throwing me against the wall, giving me blood noses, black eyes – that was in front of people in a back packers, then we got our own place and the violence went off the wall. Then I was working, I made friends with a couple of back packers, I saw this normality in their relationships, and what was happening, was I doing it again? Going into a violent relationship? I blamed myself, I had heard the warning bells in [REDACTED] and I ignored them.

I had done prostitution in [REDACTED] before rehab, my counsellor said if you enjoy it then do it, if you don't then don't. I never enjoyed it.

There was a guy in rehab who had raped me and I didn't want to see him but I had to call in. I wanted everyone to have a chance to get clean, then I saw the psychologist, and told them about him, that I was working on the street and this guy said he had some drugs but I never did it for anything but money, I went to his house I remember having a glass of water not having done anything, I woke up and he'd just finished pulled his pants up and I remember thinking just run, run. I remember making some excuses and leaving. I thought I'd brought it all on myself by being a prostitute, because I needed to be hit because I was so fucking worthless. It had been drummed into me that I was so fucking shit that god wouldn't love me, so it made sense, I became antireligious after my mum died, atheist, it made sense that they were saying these things. How would they know what my mum had said god had said, so it must be true. When I was with [REDACTED], I had told him I'd been a prostitute and when the police was called, he would tap them on the shoulder and say ... she's a prostitute and the police would say to me you need to pull your head in, and to him they'd say "just don't hit her mate, just get rid of her". There were so many times as a kid the cops would kick the shit out of me and I just don't have any respect for the cops at all, and the time when I was about [REDACTED] the cops came and they pulled my skirt down. From a really early age the Police would know how to hit you so it wouldn't show up. The bruises wouldn't show up. [REDACTED] knew how to hit, he was so fucking practised. Of course I'm never gonna call the police. I had interactions with police from the age of [REDACTED], they'd already beaten the shit out of me before I got into a violent relationship with a man. I think now that the police causes me more distress than the violent relationships, they are there to help and all that shit, I struggle with it, I really do.

As a social worker I said to a cop "do you realise how many people are being killed every day?" and he said "you've been watching too much TV" and he hung up on me. I never called the cops not once, they were called by neighbours... it brought back all that buddy buddy, they totally always let them off and I would be the one that was crazy. Then I'm gonna cop another beating after they are gone and I'd be like I'm gonna cop it. The repercussions are that I don't know how to do a relationship, I've tried a few times and I'm so, I've analysed it in my head after they've failed and I'm straight away back in the relationship, I'm waiting for them to hit me, to antagonise it, I'm waiting for the kicking out of nowhere and it effects them. They say to me what the fuck are you doing why are you acting this way. They've never said anything like ... actually one did, [REDACTED] said it once to me,

it's like you're waiting for me to hit you. I dismissed it but I hadn't thought of it for ages. And I guess one of the biggest controlling was, I was really honest, I felt I had to tell them I had been a prostitute in the past, I feel uncomfortable if I don't tell the truth, I've felt I've had to tell them that and it's always been used as a means to control me and they tell the cops. As soon as they tell them that then I'm just a whore.

Again, the whole reason I went into the sex industry was because, my body wasn't mine it was always theirs always someone else's to control, whether it was mum's or boyfriends or not even boyfriends when I blacked out, got drunk, I would wake up and be really scared. So my body was never mine. I was a binge drinker before I started using heroin. So I blacked out a lot. I don't remember ever saying yes or I'd say no and it wasn't listened to and I didn't know how to say no further. So doing prostitution, was "why not?" I'm not going to hurt anyone else, why not get paid for it, it's getting taken for free, why not get paid for it. Once you're a prostitute, you're a worthless piece of shit, you're belted, a non-human, you're not a woman and you're not a man, not a child, you're not on the human spectrum, you're a fucking whore. That's how I've experienced the cops seeing me and clients. I was put in situations where I was raped or forced to stay in their place. I guess I had choice, I was a young girl. There was a boyfriend spotting for them, and they were taking all their money, so I shouted the young girls and made sure their boyfriends didn't take it all but that was all the interaction with them.

My experience of being a woman and known to have done prostitution, suddenly I am no longer a human I am a whore, it gives licence to treat me like shit, to dismiss anything I say, anything done against me - whether it be domestic violence or house broken into, didn't who did it but the police knew me and I was treated so badly "when we find 'em we find 'em". I was not just a criminal I was just a whore. The more time I was beaten by my partners the less and less they cared about you. They have to do the paper work, it just becomes "ah fuck again, really". My brother's friend is a copper and he has told my brother, his most hated thing is going to domestic dispute, you can't win, the woman is against you, and the man is against you. And I've asked my brother to explain, the woman is against you because you don't do anything. I don't know what training that they get... the copper who told me to stop watching so much TV he was in the trained DV unit. What hope have we got. So I want cops to have better training, they need more training around mental health because woman in my experience, I have a lot of friends who have been in DV situations and have had similar experiences with the cops. I bet you I could sit down with a bunch of women and 99% would say the same thing. The cops have no idea. They are mainly male. But they have changed it now but woman can be much harsher because they become patriarchal although I've never been beaten up by a female cops. Tougher though putting cuffs on, making my wrists bleed. I believe it's because it's a mans job so they have to be manly, be violent to climb the ladder. To be respected in that work force.

If just once a cop would have pulled me aside, and said "he's not allowed to hit you" and given me his number, and said "call me". If they'd taken me away - not in front of my boyfriend. Just once, said call me, I'll do something, not even, I'll try and help you. It's not your fault. That would have helped me. But the number of times I heard "you have gotta get off their back". But the amount of times they mated up with the cops. I just can't wrap my head around it with the police. And don't say it in front of the perpetrator, what the fuck, why is it ok to say it in front of the perpetrator, "if he hits you again, call this number". I mean fuck if that number is found anywhere around... once the police leave then it's just me and him. If it was 2 blokes bluing they would arrest them but because it's a man and a woman in a domestic dispute... I just don't get it. As a women you have to stick up

for him in front of the cops, otherwise you're gonna cop it later. They don't understand that you have to stick up for him. If you don't look like you're sticking up for him you're fucked and it won't be a little beating it will be a good and proper beating. If he's got a mark against his name...

I never bothered with IVOs – I just thought it would make them angrier, especially [REDACTED], he was the last one, I realised the violence had escalated and escalated, and I feared for my life and I still double take if I see someone like him. And I still occasionally get a call from him saying "I've changed, I'm a disability worker now..." I think I've learned that I'm worth more than that, that I'm not attracted to that type of man any more, it sounds so simple, but it's not.

For a long time I became like them – I would say to a girl "well shut up then", I took it on as the truth. Their pattern is so similar, and they purposely make you feel crazy.

[REDACTED] is the only place that was helpful and only because I had a drug habit so woman who don't have a drug habit where do they go, what other issue can be addressed that's accepted as an issue, that can be worked on to rein them in to say this is also not right.

There definitely needs to be more access to services, that's something else the cops can do is to provide the resource to the person not in front of the perpetrator. What do you think's going to happen? I would never give a card to a sex worker in front of the receptionist or trafficker.

100% connection between family violence and being in the sex industry. It's the reason for working in the sex industry, my justification for working in the sex industry. It was normal for every single guy, tries to get more so if we've made an agreement to have sex, they will try to have anal sex, I would have to fight them off, but I expected that to be the norm because that was the norm at home. All my relationships, in regards to anal sex, I've always had to fight them off, how many times do I have to say no. And then cop a beating.

My mother, calling me a tart, slut – I didn't know what it meant. She called me that because I wanted to speak to my brother's friends and it made me think, I am. And it's a word that's thrown about all the time. You sleep with anyone and it's the word used to describe you. They only thing you're worth is your body and if you can get paid for it, you're on a winning streak there. Yeah. The lack of knowledge, the secrets the police kept, by boyfriends kept that it wasn't ok, that's not a normal relationship. One of the biggest misuses of power that could have changed so much for me. That the police never said to me that this is not alright. Not just illegal or legal, but it's not right ok, morally ethically, this is not a normal relationship. So they were more like another DV case, so I was like, this happens to everyone. You stop it, to me, you stop doing what you're doing. "He's not just gonna hit you out of the blue, is he? – a copper said to me. I hadn't done anything to provoke him and bang. And not having anyone and all you get is "leave him". It's just not helpful. Even as a social worker, I know... I went to a specialised DV service the other day trying to get a woman accepted as a client there. They were angry at her for returning to her partner. She didn't eat for 4 days, doesn't know the system. Doesn't speak English, she had nowhere to go and had to return to him. They wrote on their formal reason for not taking her was that she worked illegally, and that was [REDACTED]

I think I've told you everything I need to tell you.