

Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence**Anonymous ()****1 June 2015**

I met my partner when I was [REDACTED] I think. I'd never been involved in drugs or anything but he was. I quickly went from hard working, money in the bank, to using. It was all new and exciting – he was a bad boy.

A month into it – while driving – he lashed out and bit my hand. It was the first incidence of violence. It shocked me.

Because I was using, I got sucked in. He threatened to kill himself – would reverse the role quickly from me being the victim to him being the victim. I wasn't in love – it was a new lifestyle. A hopeless romantic dream: share house, using a bit of drugs.

Every time I said I'd had enough he would break down my self esteem. I'd end up giving in and going back. I was getting physically hurt every day and emotionally at night. Sometimes he wouldn't let me sleep.

I fell pregnant. It made me really scared. I realised I couldn't go through with anything. I was really scared and frightened and he was weirdly excited. Our families said congratulations.

As the pregnancy went on he would ease up a bit and then everything would come back.

I had to do everything for him. When he went to get methodone, I had to go with him. That's how it was. I said I was tired one day and thought I'd stay home. I got a knife in my leg. I stayed because I was too scared of what would happen [if I left].

We had our [REDACTED] and got a place. Everything was OK for a while then something out of the blue would snap again. I justified it because it wasn't every day.

We were at a friend's house with [REDACTED]. I asked for a cigarette. He said something horrible. I was holding [REDACTED] and he punched me in the back. I lost feelings in my legs. One of his friends took [REDACTED] out of my arms (before I fell).

I called my parents. I packed up things and lived with my parents. Constant phonecalls and harassment continued. He'd say, macho: "I want to see my [REDACTED]". Never used [REDACTED] name.

I have never had the backing of his family – even though they knew about the violence.

I let my guard down – I didn't mind catching up with him and [REDACTED].

Another incident happened. I remember going to a refuge. They were supportive there. I struggled with a sense of being alone: "Am I doing the right thing? Am I breaking up a the family?". You need to work with women while they are at a refuge – eg with a psychologist, or a group. You're left there with your own thoughts and guilt.

I went back again. I went to a refuge three times. He worked his way back by harassing me and making me feel guilty about custody of [REDACTED]. The third time I never went back.

When I went to the third refuge it was with a new child, [REDACTED]. He had kicked me out – the kids were in the house. My [REDACTED] grabbed [REDACTED] and ran up the driveway. We hid at a neighbour's house while I called Mum. They drove us to a place I thought he didn't know about. It was easier this time – we had no phone. The kids had no shoes.

I rang the refuge in the morning. I organised to go down the street and, get some money and buy some shoes. Had to go into the bank (I had no wallet or purse). I went straight to the refuge. I knew I wasn't going back. It was too much.

I had four weeks to find a place – five weeks in the end. All they could help with was a list of private rentals. The day I had to leave they (the refuge) expected me to get to [REDACTED] homeless referral service. Mum said – it's not good enough. I never wanted to put the burden on her. When he knew I was there he'd start on her. Then I found a unit.

Since then, he's never done it again. We just spoke about the kids. He knew this time I wasn't coming back.

I went to the Family Court – it was around the time they were making statements about 50% time for fathers. I didn't have a good time with the Court. The Child Representative didn't want either of us to have the kids. Mum helped me open up (to the Court) for the first time. I still didn't have a good time.

All I wanted to know from DHS was if he lost it when the kids were with him, who would protect the kids? They said they couldn't do anything unless something happened. With the Family Court – need to take more notice of allegations of family violence. I just wanted to know who would protect my kids when they're over there [with their father].

It's great to know you can ring and get protected at a shelter. But if I knew I could call the police in a desperate moment, and they would support me at each stage... There's too much to do afterwards, schooling, psychologists. Need to put money into the things afterwards. If you knew you'd get that support you'd leave in a heartbeat.

There should be a cooling off period, US style, taking the men away for a 24 hour period. Then you could get things together and leave.

Police have come a long way but need to get to the next stage. If you knew there was a process and you knew you were safe a lot of people would leave. The majority wouldn't go to a refuge – you just need time to collect your thoughts.

You need support. Someone's been making your decisions for so long – it would be good to have a support system more available.

He always controlled my drug addiction. I'm hoping I can get a nice balance of living after DV but not to the extreme I was.