

27th May 2015

Royal Commission Submission.

In [REDACTED] I left my (now ex) husband due to domestic violence. I left my home in the middle of the night and followed instructions to get to battered woman's shelter. The taxi had to drop me at a location where I would phone again and someone would come and meet me. As sometimes some taxi drivers partners were in the centre they could not be allowed to know its location.

The following day after my arrival at the centre I was advised to write a letter to my husband letting him know clearly why I had left and taken our daughter with me. That we were safe and that I would soon be in touch with details about contact with his daughter. I also applied for a family violence intervention order.

The order was put in place by the court and I was making arrangements with Relationships Australia for my daughter to see her father at a secure contact centre within [REDACTED] weeks of leaving him. Once the arrangements were made on the day of contact I took my daughter to the centre and dropped her off. Half an hour later I was called and told that my daughter's father had knocked over a security guard and abducted our child from the secure contact centre. The police were called and several hours later my daughter was located. I was driven to the police station to collect my daughter by the police who were with me at the battered women's shelter. Whilst together my husband had threatened to kill me and our daughter if I ever left him. I was very distressed by the experience fearing for my daughter's life. On the way to collect my daughter a male police officer said to me "well its obvious he just really loves his daughter." As though he was reprimanding me for being so distressed that my husband had abducted her from the centre. This has stuck in my mind ever since as I could not believe the officer was defining my (now ex) husband's violent behaviour that risked our daughter's safety as a show of his love rather than as attempts at ongoing control and abuse. Love would have been attending the contact session and spending the time making sure our daughter was okay and knew that he loved her and would do what it takes to be in her life even though he and I were breaking up. Love is not attacking people, terrifying your children and driving off in cars at dangerous speeds.

I moved to [REDACTED] and about [REDACTED] months later my husband had found my address through a mutual friend and started leaving unsigned notes and threats in my mailbox. I reported it to the police that this was in breach of the family violence order but to my knowledge all that happened was a verbal warning and he there were no official consequences for him. I broke my lease and moved house because I was terrified he would follow through on his threats and kill us. I developed agoraphobia as part of my post traumatic stress disorder. It took me [REDACTED] years and thousands of dollars in therapies to recover from the trauma of that relationship to a point where it no longer plagued my everyday life. Though I feel I was very well supported by the staff at the battered women's shelter my

experience with the police and the lack of consequences or enforcement of the family violence order have haunted me.