

To the Royal Commission into Domestic Violence,

I would prefer to not go into detail with my submission but instead will provide you with a brief rundown of my experience with 'domestic violence'.

At ■ I had my first encounter with domestic violence with my first boyfriend. For ■ years I suffered sexual exploitation, mental and emotional abuse as well as physical abuse. At the time I did not have any tools, knowledge or support in dealing with this. When I finally plucked up the courage to leave him, he then stalked me for approximately ■ months which included breaking into my family home and stealing my wallet, phone and any other items I needed for day to day life on ■ occasions.

Following this relationship I was single until about ■ when I started a new relationship with what I thought was a lovely man. Very quickly the verbal and emotional abuse started and that was accompanied by physical intimidation, shoving and threats of self harm if I dared to leave. After ■ years I again plucked up the courage to end the relationship.

Very quickly after the end of that relationship I fell under the charms of another seemingly wonderful man. The first time he assaulted me I was ■ months pregnant and he strangled me in a drunken rage leaving finger prints on my neck in the form of bruises. The emotional and financial abuse I suffered with him was constant throughout the ■ year relationship but the physical abuse didn't become frequent until after our ■ son was born and he started abusing drugs regularly. With his drug and alcohol addiction I suffered multiple violent rages in which he would punch me in places he thought no one would see – thighs, arms etc, as well as sexual assault which I now know was rape. Any time I made indications of leaving he would take my car keys, wallet and threaten the children. During this time I sought help from the police on ■ occasions and each time was treated with complete indifference bordering on contempt. Each time they offered for me to press charges but whilst I was still stuck living with him I was too scared of the repercussions. Each encounter with the police left me feeling unheard, unimportant and alone. I also sought help from a women's refuge but they told me that without police or hospital records to indicate a serious risk to mine and my childrens safety that our situation was not dire enough to warrant their services. Finally after ■ years of abuse towards myself and my children I finally was able to leave.

I hope that this commission will find that the term 'domestic violence' is untrue and inaccurate. It is assault.

I hope that money is invested in educating the public and in particular victims of domestic assault.

I hope that more services are made available to help women like me.

I hope that verbal, emotional and psychological abuse is recognised as something as serious and damaging as physical assault.

I hope that this disgusting culture of ignoring and belittling women like myself who are seeking help is changed.

I hope that no other woman in my position ever goes unnoticed, unheard and uncared for when she is reaching out and in dire need of help.