

Dear Victims of crime Commissioner,

I am aware with the current awareness being raised by social and general media about domestic violence you probably receive millions of these emails and letters. But I am finding the need to say my piece anyhow. Please know that I am eternally grateful if you even give this email the time of day,.

As I sit here and stare at my beautiful [REDACTED] daughter with so much love and joy, the TV flashes to yet another breaking story.. Another woman dead, missing, presumed a victim of foul play.. I sit here and I worry about the world I have brought my child into. A world where we now call the loss of female life via abuse, torture, rape and eventual murder an 'epidemic'.

Where these statistics (I am sure you are well aware of from 2005 and now climbing,)

- “Just under half a million Australian women reported that they had experienced physical or sexual violence or sexual assault in the past 12 months.
- More than a million women had experienced physical or sexual assault by their male current or ex-partner since the age of 15 (some women may be counted twice if they experienced both physical and sexual assault).
- 37.8% of women who experienced physical assault in the 12 months before the survey said the perpetrator was a current or previous male partner and 34.4% said the perpetrator was a male family member or friend. Most incidences of physical assault against women in the 12 months prior to 2005 were committed in a home (64.1%).
- 33.3% of women had experienced physical violence since the age of 15.
- 19.1% of women had experienced sexual violence since the age of 15.
- 12.4% of women had been sexually abused before the age of 15, compared with 4.5% of men, between 1996 and 2005. There was an increase in the reporting of sexual assault to police from 14.9% to 18.9% between 1996 and 2005 and there was an increase in the reporting of physical violence to police from 18.5% to 36%.
- 64% of women who experienced physical assault and 81.1% of women who experienced sexual assault still did not report it to police. The proportion of women aged between 18 and 34 who reported experiencing physical violence has decreased but the proportion of women who reported experiencing physical violence after 45 increased over the same period. The percentage of women who reported that their children had witnessed partner-related violence either from a current or ex-partner was lower than in 1996.
- The majority of violence against men is committed by other men. Of men who reported that they had experienced physical violence in the 12 months before the survey, 73.7% said that the perpetrator was a male.” (Source <http://www.domesticviolence.com.au/pages/domestic-violence-statistics.php> Source: *Department of Families, Housing and Community Affairs Fact Sheet 2 Women's Safety **)

And then I want to cry..

Life was not always so joyous for me. I can't even bare to think about what happened to me happening to my girl when she is older. My heart cannot hold such pain. So as I sit here looking at these statistics I feel afraid. Afraid that no matter what I do the odds are stacked against her. The best I can do as a Mother is make sure she is confident and strong enough to no when to say "No way" and even then that will not be enough.

In the cases of Jill Magher and the recent Stephanie Scott.. It was a case of being in the wrong place at the wrong time or being exposed to the wrong people. Yet these people also had histories on them.. Parole and parole violations. Histories of mental illness and violent behaviour. (In the second case I am aware it was never proven)

Then I turn to my own case. I was someone with very low self esteem. I was suckered in by all the charm a narcissist has to offer. I felt important for a time.. Then of course gradually as I was isolated I was torn down piece by piece with the occasional glimpse at a re build and then repeat...

I suffered multiple nights of torture in the form of physical, mental and sexual abuse. I was broken down to the point of no longer wanting to live before I got away.

One night I remembered it all too vividly.. He had had way too much to drink.. I had begged him not to. I remember him telling me "Leave me alone . This is how I cope."

He then hit this strange unintelligible faze where it was like he was mimicking several different people. He was putting on strange accents and talking about doing all sorts of bizarre sexual things to women and telling me how I disgusted him.

He then kept asking me the same question over and over.. "Why did you go see you male friend without telling me?" (This was worded much more crudely)

When I gave him the same rational response I always had he angered.. He kept on asking. He had this interrogation style that would break me down. I would in the end search for the answer he wanted and not the truth just to stop the anger onset. This time I could not stop it. He burst out in a red fury and foamed at the mouth yelling " I will strangle it out of you then." To which he then pinned me by my throat against the wall.

I still believe to this day had I not been pinned with my legs to my stomach on the bed I wouldn't be here today. As the lights darkened I summoned the will to kick him off me. I had nowhere to run and he would out run me anyhow. I was dressed in a see through baby pink thigh length nightie , in a place I was not familiar with and afraid of at night,, [REDACTED], [REDACTED]. He controlled what I wore to bed as he decreed that my need to wear Pyjamas was a slight against him. I had to appease him. I spent the night waiting for him to sober up.. Yelling at me in all different voices, molesting me and then pushing me into a corner telling me how much I disgusted him.. I muffled my cries as they angered him.. He would yell and hiss at me to " Shut the F*ck up".

Flash forward a few months.. I have left hospital for mental health reasons and gotten away for good but my fight is still far from over.. I go to the police in [REDACTED] asking for an AVO. I describe to the police everything I have been through. The above incident is just one of many. During the interview.. He calls me multiple times and even yells at the interviewing

officer. The police convince me that I should press charges of sexual assault despite the lack of physical evidence.

If I had known then what I do now.. I would of not even begun such a process.

Months of questioning. Months of him being aggravated and managing to circumvent the AVO to make my life hell.

On one occasion he laughed and told me "200 Meters is a joke to a [REDACTED] anyhow." I still to this day 3 years on find myself looking all around me when I go outside... even when I am at home near a window.

And yet... I am the one who was repeatedly questioned. I was questioned more than he was. All he had to do was lie. I can tell you right down to what he was drinking or wearing or I was wearing or where we were , what the weather was doing... and all he had to do was lie.

I kept getting asked " If it was so bad why didn't you leave?". Please for the love of anything, can we train police not to ask that question of people who have gone through domestic abuse? It is so degrading and dismissive. In fact the whole process is demoralizing and dismissive.

The onus is entirely on the victim to prove they were the victim. Unless he raped me on the couch in front of an audience and I made it then to a hospital there after to present evidence, assuming the many factors of me not being scared to go to hospital and having the means to get to one and then the people who viewed evidence to come forward... Then I have nothing.

The flat mate who heard me crying multiple times said nothing. I was never allowed to leave just after something happened. If I left for a moment I was called multiple times and the person I was with threatened until I came back. I was blackmailed and threatened until I'd come back. It wasn't until i had nothing left to loose and he had held me against my will for three weeks abusing ,drugging, raping and starving me. I lost all will to live and made the plea that I needed to go to hospital or I'd kill myself the second he took too long in the toilet.

He thought that would be a great way to get power of attorney over me and he tried very hard to. Trying to convince the trained professionals I needed to be with him to stay safe. That my Mother was not credible in knowing my well being ect ect.. I am forever grateful to the trained professional who saw the woman who was a shadow of a person too afraid to speak up when he was present. That man saved me.

So here we are... The reason I felt the need to write this... I am going through VOCAT. Where all other legal systems have failed me... us.. so many of us survivors... I decided to try and fix some of the financial abuse I had been through and the last effort to know I have done all that I possibly could for justice and yet here I am writing to someone , something that will probably never be read.

The VOCAT system like the rest of the legal system dealing in domestic violence is a mess!

Their mission statement includes something along the lines of doing their best not to re victimize the victim and that the burden of proof is supposed to be a lot less so in legal case against the perpetrator ...and yet I am experiencing flash backs at a phenomenal rate. I am feeling more drained that I have in a while. I am again feeling like the victim. I am being

questioned on my ability to tell the truth and my memory. (These are things he did to me constantly.. I feel as if I am suffering from 'gaslighting' all over again) . they have gone through my medical records, had me independently assessed, gone through financial records, have the records from my ongoing counsellor, from the hospital I was admitted to after I escaped the abuse, the police statements from of few occasions of escape and AVO breaches as well as the original AVO statements, from doctors and psychiatrists....All of which imply or state I was scared for my safety or something most certainly occurred in their professional opinions. Yet all this was and probably still is not enough.

My lawyer, barrister and advocate say this is the worst case of scrutiny upon the victim they have seen in this system... Yet here I am a [REDACTED] yr old single Mother.. No addictions, felonies or AVO's against me. A clean record. A woman with careers in [REDACTED] Who's last darn job was a [REDACTED] for criminy's sake. There he is with multiple AVO's against him, an [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with a history of violence and possible [REDACTED]. Yet I am the one trying to prove I am not lying?!??

I am waiting on the final word. I want it over. Just over. I no longer care if I get anything back. In fact it was never even really about that. It was more about being believed by some sort of legal mention and manner. Now I do not even hold hope for that.

It is a sad state of affairs when victims both male and female feel there is no point in trying to get justice. That there is no point in standing up for themselves because they will ultimately be bullied back down to just being the victim. I feel like my abuser will 'win' all over again. He would take great pleasure in knowing how I have fought for nothing. I feel like that magistrate looking down on me is in league with him. Like no matter what I do that the system is designed to protect the perpetrator's rights over the victim's rights and that was something he always used to say to me..." You know what babe, I love our legal system. It would rather set ten guilty men free than deprive one innocent man of his freedom."

If Jill and Stephanie where here today I'll bet they'd tell you how much the system sucks too.

I sincerely hope you know this is not directly aimed at you but at the disgrace of a system we have to live by. I am sure you receive many an angry and dismayed email/letter. I would like to thank you for taking up the job and task you have and give you my sincerest wishes of warmth and luck with this massive undertaking.

Kindest regards,

Many Many women and men who suffer in silence..

Lucy Street

