

Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence

29 May 2015

A personal story.

To whom it may concern,

I lived in a violent relationship for [REDACTED] years. I fell in love with a man that wasn't real. My husband committed emotional abuse, financial abuse, psychological abuse, and sexual abuse against me. But I didn't know this until after I had left the relationship, and I began to talk to other women about my story, and finally, to disclose to professionals.

I didn't know how to tell those close to me I needed help. I didn't have a language to describe what was wrong in my relationship. I didn't know who to call or who to see or which hotline to ring. I felt so stupid. It was all in my head.

I wish there had been information campaigns on TV or on the radio, that told me what abuse is and what a healthy relationship isn't. I wish I had known that all of the services for women experiencing domestic violence looked after women experiencing all kinds of violence, not just physical violence. I wish my doctors and my psychologists and my psychiatrists and maternal and child health nurses had asked me about my relationship with my husband, if I had ever considered leaving, and if it was fear that prevented me from going. I wish someone had recognised the power divide between him and myself. I wish they'd recognised my depression and anxiety as a deep sense of worthlessness, and fear, that had been instilled in me, by him, over years. I wish they'd said, the problem isn't you. It is his behaviour. I wish that I'd been able to protect my children from seeing what he did to me.

And I'm so glad I left him.

But I am still scared when he threatens me at my door at handovers.

I am still scared he won't return my children to me safe and well.

I am still married to him because he won't sign the divorce papers.

I still feel trapped by him.

I can't afford legal fees to protect my rights in court.

I am trapped by the system.

It doesn't stop.

Thank you for reading my story,

[REDACTED]