

RCFV - ANONYMOUS



To The Royal Commission on Family Violence,

Thank you for taking the time to read my statement brief. Yesterday, I was told I had missed out on the forums that were held and it was most unlikely to be able to speak to the commission, so I have revised yesterday's letter. I continue to beseech the commission for a thirty minute time to speak in the future. I would like to bring to the Royal Commission's attention the following:

- **Church's role in aiding the perpetrator (male):** I was manipulated to stay within my marriage by five different ministers & respective congregations. The last attack nearly killed me and I had to leave [REDACTED]. Even at that point, the magistrate's court ignored the stalking, witness tampering/harassment to drop the AVO, false statements to court (proven within a trial) and social alienation within the community and my workplace and even grabbed in [REDACTED] by one couple. One church assisted my ex-husband to hide assets. Another minister phoned my friends and warned them to have nothing to do with me, reveal where I was hiding. Another declared I was protected by God because I didn't die in the assault and to drop the AVO and return to the marriage because I married in sickness and health and he was only "sick." I was told I am my husband's property, scripture misquoted, to be obedient so he wouldn't have to hit me, don't place demands, allow him to try and be a man, more loving, etc. to the point of one congregation member coaching him in how to respond/act regarding psych evaluations and court questioning. All the while, my ex had been telling years of lies and untruths behind my back. In the witness box his excuse was, *"To make me feel better about myself."* Whenever I had to appear in either the Magistrate or Family Court, the church/ministers appeared for prayer vigils/support for him-not me. Once, someone even entered a private consulting room of the court house I was in with my lawyer to harass me. Never once did the court protect me. I was warned my consequence if I pressed assault charges and was refused a trip to the police station when I needed to escape in the night.
- **Poor quality of marriage counselling:** I am gravely concerned about the lack of skills for lay ministers, counsellors and psychologists in the area of family violence counselling. One church sponsored counsellor said, "Be gentle with him, he's trying to be a man." Another counsellor said (in regards to violence), "Oh [REDACTED], You are slipping back into your old ways, just walk away when you want to hit her." That

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was an invitation to provoke then leave the house for a day (another form of abuse). Many did not want to address the family violence issues even when he said he was jealous of me. Out of ■ counsellors, only the last one (a psychologist) identified a personality disorder and tried to get our family doctor to speak to him (the psychologist) as he feared for the life of myself and ■ was not taking his antidepressants properly. The doctor refused as only I had signed the consent form, even though I pleaded with the family doctor to speak to the psychologist and why. A week later, ■ nearly killed me in a sudden and unprovoked rage.

- **Weaknesses of AVO's:** I found AVO's to be worthless. Loosing count of the amount of breeches my ex-husband committed within two states, I have had the police in ■ tell me that yes he breeched his AVO each and every time but, "We have to prove criminal intent and we have more important crimes to deal with." Each time, I had evidence/witnesses and they just weren't interested. A few examples include: breaking into my new home because he wanted to inspect its appropriateness for his children, witness tampering by phoning my family and friends in ■ with lies to alienate me from support (he filed a false affidavit saying my friends and family wanted nothing to do with me [**verified by a judge with no court consequence**]). It took my lawyer to speak directly to my family to get them to understand what was actually happening and their actions were placing me and ■ in danger. I lost all of my ■ friends.). He phoned asking for any "dirt" on me for court and when he was turned away, they finally got to hear his volatile persona come to life. He phoned/stalked me insisting I dropped the AVO or else, spread rumours about me within my workplace and general community to the point for safety I had to live for ■ months in a closed women's refuge. AVO's taken out in one state, should automatically be across every state- ■ I was never told I had to take out a separate AVO for another state. I was never given a court date to renew the order, follow up etc. Even to this day, he has carried out every threat he stated he would do to me if I left him except one. I know that if I don't abide by his every custody demand he will carry out the last threat- kill me. Even our ■ now know how he will do it and have warned me. I continue to be at his mercy.
- **Police incompetence:** It has been my experience, the police do not follow policy and procedure regarding family violence, nor do they understand the uniqueness of the situation in an upper middleclass family where the wife is a migrant. An example- It is ■, I enter the police station with ■, bruises/strangulation marks on my neck, torn rotator cuff and body bruising. The desk sergeant told me, "You don' want your husband to go to jail. Go somewhere else tonight and sleep on it. I can arrest him, but he'll just post bail and then get madder." I left the station with no report filed/photos taken. No offer to phone for a domestic violence worker. Another time, my ex is going to appear before a magistrate to hear a case of serious assault. I go to the police station to offer medical reports, etc. I was turned

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away because they weren't interested in the reports and they had the case mis-listed. I never was able to speak with the police prosecutor ever- even on the day of court when he pled guilty to a lesser charge. The police prosecutor never spoke one word during the case, only a nod of his head. The antics that day in court were passed on to a female city council board member who contacted me with condolences and some assistance. This is what happens in a small town when your ex has money and a family name. I can speak of several other instances as well. His court ordered anger management programs or psych evaluation was obeyed. There were never any court follow ups to see if he had complied or consequence for not doing so. Why? When I was in the most danger, the police gave him the address of my "safe house." He sent someone around to speak to me. That was not considered a breach let alone a violation of my safety.

- **Child Support:** A violent ex-husband will use child support to control you. I was nearly bankrupt regarding how my ex used the system. As a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] he manipulated his income to half it for child support purposes, knew how much back child support he could accrue without having wages garnished, etc. In domestic violence situations, the affected party should be able to have wages automatically garnished and the violent party should be under tighter scrutiny regarding sudden and significant drops in income. I had the evidence for Centrelink fraud, and the tax dept. and child support weren't interested. In the end, Centrelink only made him pay back \$[REDACTED] in ill gained funds and **never prosecuted him-a [REDACTED], with fraud. A psych report showed he has a certified obsessional and controlling personality and failed the lie test. The evidence showed deliberate deceit. He should have been charged. Why wasn't he?**
- **Conflicting laws between Magistrate and Family Court:** A woman is posed with two choices; neither has a good outcome for her or the children. Stay in the marriage to protect your children and loose your life and sense of person or leave and loose the right to protect the children and continue to receive abuse in other forms and enter a life, often of poverty. One law says DHS will take your children if you stay for failing to keep the children in a safe environment and another says automatic 50/50 custody when you walk out the door even though the abusive partner never proved to provide any significant care for the children- even during [REDACTED] weeks of supervised visitation (paid for by me) or how to care for [REDACTED] because "Now he wants to (that I have left him)." My home was broken into by him because a court assessor insisted I give him my address and photo of our new home (He had a family violence conviction, yet he convinced the assessor it was just a misunderstanding was the quote she gave whilst vouching he appeared to be a congenial and shy man). The police were not interested even though he admitted to doing it because nothing was stolen.
- **Poor Family Violence Training by Doctors/Midwives/Nurses in Australia:** [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Our family

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doctor was hopeless as were the midwives who literally walked away from reported abuse. In the hospital, during labour, there was no documentation regarding his inappropriate behaviour in hospital (I was hit many times in pregnancy whilst on bed rest both in hospital and at home). No one asked why I had two black eyes or the other marks. During labour and post-partum nothing changed, even when he acted out at me, staff and a visitor. Crying one day I informed the midwife he had suddenly stopped his medication and something was wrong. She smiled and walked away. [REDACTED] weeks after discharge, I was being assaulted again because [REDACTED] taking up too much time, people came to see [REDACTED] not him, [REDACTED] got presents not him, etc. If I did not give him time alone two evenings a week by taking [REDACTED] and me to a church activity, I was truly afraid he would kill me and or [REDACTED]. He promised he would hit less if I did so. I informed the midwife about regular Sunday night violence and her response was, "What if you just had a visitor on Sunday nights or slept elsewhere? On the next visit let's do the postnatal depression test." Four months later, he came within seconds of killing me. The psychologist warned our family doctor he feared this would happen and his concerns for a paranoid and obsessional personality disorder in my ex. No one came to my help. How life could have had a different outcome at this point or even before I became pregnant when he was beating me in front of other campers in a campground had anyone called for help instead of turning a blind eye. Those behaviours instilled my coping mechanism of it wasn't that bad/you provoked it because no one else is acknowledging it.

My previous statement to the commission had other bullet points, but with the time limit to have this handed in today, I must close, now. Thank you for hearing my words and attempting to make a difference. I continue to ask for an opportunity to speak before you.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]