



Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing to tell you my story, my story of suffering and torment at the hands of my now ex-partner and [REDACTED] father. I also want to tell you about the torment I am still suffering due to a system that meant to protect us but is instead failing victims of domestic violence.

I will begin by giving you the condensed version of my own personal hell so you can understand where I have been and hopefully to give you an inside perspective on how damaging this whole process is.

I am [REDACTED] years of age and a university educated women, I am also now a single mother of [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. I have a Bachelor's Degree as a [REDACTED]. I never thought that I would become a victim of domestic violence. I met [REDACTED] online, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. We became friends over a number of months, we used a voice chat program to communicate with one another and later we used skype to video chat. [REDACTED] seemed to be a smart, funny and intelligent guy. The only catch was he lived half a world away [REDACTED]. As our friendship began to become flirty I joked that he could get a 12 month working holiday visa to come to Australia and meet me. All of a sudden he told me he had obtained a Visa via the online application process and was booking a plane ticket. I was nervous but delighted that someone was interested enough in me to come half a world to meet me. I had low self-confidence [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] flew into Australia on the [REDACTED] and began his 12 month holiday visa. [REDACTED] was always at my rented apartment and suggested rather quickly that he should move in due to the cost of the motel being expensive and limiting his free spending money. [REDACTED] wanted to instead spend his money on forming a household with me.

Things seemed ok, [REDACTED] clashed with my family [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] He became angry when they didn't respond positively to
him [REDACTED] was suggesting we
take a [REDACTED] holiday [REDACTED] to see where he was from, he pressured me more and more and
when [REDACTED] I figured it would be a good time for a few months escape
and that I could come back inspired to find a new job.

We flew to [REDACTED] cracks in [REDACTED]'s personality started to show through when he
began to create drama and arguments with my friends [REDACTED]
things got escalated to the point where he grabbed a knife and wanted to kill himself. I was the
one stopping him and trying to balance out his emotional outbursts and irrational behavior.

[REDACTED] I was taken to
hospital for scans to ensure that there was no further damage, [REDACTED] seemed to be sore but ok
and left me at the hospital to go and shower and get food while I was left waiting. I begged him
to bring me my oral contraceptive pill as I was due to take it, he made a stupid excuse about me
not falling pregnant and not needing to take it. Due to the accident I was given a [REDACTED] pay out
by [REDACTED] insurance for pain and suffering, to this day I don't know what happened to the
money as [REDACTED] took the cheque from me and told me he would bank it so I could have some
spending money.

I started to become wary of his sudden mood changes and controlling behavior, and I was
secretly planning with a friend to assist me in leaving and getting to the airport to fly back to
Australia. There were multiple times while we were in [REDACTED] where [REDACTED] became
uncontrollably angry and would storm out or disappear for a couple of hours. I found out right
before I was going to leave [REDACTED] that I was pregnant, my world changed that day. I was isolated
from my close friends and family half a world away. [REDACTED] told me that I shouldn't tell anyone,
that I shouldn't ring my parents. I rung them anyway which caused a huge fight when I got off
the phone. [REDACTED] later apologized and told me that everything would be fine and that we would
go back to Australia and become a family. I believed his fairy tale ending, it sounded so perfect
and I was pregnant with his baby.

Things were ok when we flew back [REDACTED] had been behaving respectfully to me
and had begun talking of ways he could stay in Australia with me when his visa expired in
[REDACTED] He suggested a Partner Visa where I sponsored him.

On [REDACTED] physically assaulted me for the first time I was head butted
[REDACTED] police were called and a statement
was taken from me. Police issued him with a safety notice to prevent him from returning to the
home until the IVO they applied for on my behalf was heard in court the next day. [REDACTED]

the police applied for IVO was heard in the Magistrates Court and with my consent ended in a final order issued with the allowance to have contact and live together, however protecting me from committing family violence. I began engaging with the hospital Social Worker . Which told me would cause nothing but trouble and that I shouldn't be talking to anyone about what happened, I often had appointments with on the same day as antenatal checkups which rarely bothered to attend so he didn't know how often I was seeing the hospital social worker as I was scared it would cause me to be hurt again or at least end in an argument where he threatened to leave me as a young single mother.

During my mother had to come to our residence in and stay a few nights to help deal with being verbally abusive and storming out on me. My mother was on her way from her home in Victoria when decided to return to our residence. tried to guilt me into staying in rather than with my family as he didn't want to attend. He even told me I was talking the unborn baby away from his daddy this sort of emotional blackmail became a frequent way tried to control me.

In backed me up against the wall and threatening to punch me raising his fist at me. Police were called and a statement was made against the police applied to have the IVO increased to a full no contact order. I chose to leave gathering some personal items and moving in with them temporarily. That weekend I received a number of abusive threatening text messages and phone calls from, first attempting to woo me back and then emotionally blackmail me to returning home by threatening to commit suicide if I did not return to our shared apartment. was arrested by the Police Department and interviewed in relation to these matters and released on bail. One of the bail conditions was for him to surrender his passport, this became the focus of many arguments with with him blaming me that his passport had been taken and rather than taking responsibility for his actions he continuously berated and belittled me stating that I was the reason he had acted in such a manner and I caused all his legal problems, he also blamed the Australian Government stating that we are not a first world and much better. He continued to berate me and was trying to bully be into going back to with him stating that there was better medical care and that I could overstay a visa and be granted citizenship when was born. I have later found out that he could have had me deported after our child's birth and I would have had to leave behind while I was forced back to Australia.

On my father and I attended the Magistrates Court and an interim full intervention order was issued for 2 weeks to allow me time to

consider what sort of conditions should be made on the order as I was not summons to court due to clerical errors. Two weeks later I chose to have the IVO put back to the partial IVO allowing contact as I was in the third trimester of my pregnancy and felt that [REDACTED] and I needed to work things out for our baby and his ability to remain within Australia.

[REDACTED] agree to attend couples counselling which begun [REDACTED] under pressure from [REDACTED] I withdrew my previous statements to Police about his domestic violence as [REDACTED] was served with charges relating to these offenses and breaches to the IVO. [REDACTED] convinced me that withdrawing my statement to police would be best as if he was charged he would not be able to stay in Australia and then he would leave me and our baby when born to fend for ourselves.

[REDACTED] convinced me that it would never happen again and that I should move back in to our shared apartment. I felt pressured and unsure but being less than a month before my due date for our baby I wanted to have everything sorted and ready for the baby. [REDACTED] also convinced me that I was to blame for his actions as I cause him to behave in such a manner, therefore if I wanted the relationship to work I should find him a lawyer and cover the cost associated or I would be left a single mother and be an embarrassment to my family.

In [REDACTED] we attending further couples counselling appointments and when challenged by one of the counsellors [REDACTED] for talking over me, [REDACTED] walked out in an angry rage leaving me to finish the session, after this [REDACTED] refused to continue to see that counsellor.

On the [REDACTED] criminal matters were brought before the [REDACTED] Magistrates Court. [REDACTED] no legal aid staff available the matter was adjourned to the [REDACTED] By this stage I was heavily pregnant, but [REDACTED] continued to blame me for his legal trouble and had me convinced that I was the cause. I was becoming isolated from my friends and family as none of them wanted to be around [REDACTED] and they couldn't stand watching me losing myself to his destructive bullying.

On [REDACTED] was born, due to a traumatic birth I remained in hospital [REDACTED] Although visiting hours opened at 8am until 8pm for partners, [REDACTED] chose to stay up all night [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I felt abandoned and alone when I needed him most he was sleeping. I noted other women's partners arriving right on 8am to see their babies and spend the day with them and there I was alone, tired, in pain and a new first time mum needing support and comfort from [REDACTED] but it never came [REDACTED] days after [REDACTED] birth when I was due to be discharged Department of Human Services – Child Protection came to interview us at the hospital. The Social Worker [REDACTED] had reported the ongoing domestic violence I was suffering from [REDACTED] and flagged her concerns for to them. We were made to sign undertakings

stating we would report anything such as arguments or violence to child protection, and we would engage with the child protection officer while they went about their investigation. The child protection officer [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] DHS office made a number of visits and phone calls to us, each time a call or visit happened [REDACTED] would film/record it secretly and spend the next few days saying nasty and spite filled things about [REDACTED]. He would also blame me for reaching out for help to the social worker saying that I had caused a report to be put into Child Protection and that I should never trust any services. As I was aware he was recording every visit I was unable to truthfully tell the DHS officer that [REDACTED] was leaving the majority of the parenting duties to me. He would infrequently change [REDACTED] nappy, refuse to cook meals or do housework [REDACTED].

On [REDACTED] [REDACTED] had his criminal matters postponed by his lawyer which I was made to pay for out of guilt and threats to leave. The postponement was due to the lawyer not yet being issued with a brief of evidence by the police.

On [REDACTED] [REDACTED] grabbed a knife and threatened to kill me, I grabbed our baby and hid in the bedroom while I rung police. They attended but [REDACTED] had left the property, I gave a statement to police but asked for him not to be charged as he was now a father [REDACTED] and I felt our baby should not have a daddy behind bars. A full IVO was issued however [REDACTED] dodged police so he would not get served with a court summons, preventing the order from being active. DHS was informed and I was forced to once again pack bags and leave the home with our child to prevent [REDACTED] being taken for his protection. Around this time [REDACTED] had been pressuring me to get medical clearance to go back to work as he had quit his job and lost money [REDACTED].

On the [REDACTED] criminal matters were heard in court and dismissed due to a lack of evidence the police had not issued a brief of evidence to the lawyer and the court paperwork was reported to us to be missing. The IVO was also heard in court and due to complications that day I was unable to be in the court room ([REDACTED] [REDACTED]), therefore the IVO was dropped back to the order allowing contact and [REDACTED] name was not added to the order even though I had requested [REDACTED] be added to the order.

[REDACTED] and I spent a period of [REDACTED] living apart as DHS did not want him in the house as he was deemed a risk to [REDACTED] safety.

The [REDACTED] Police Department needed to interview [REDACTED] in relation to his threat to kill me. [REDACTED] refused to answer their calls and instead changed his number [REDACTED]. The police contacted me and told me to tell him that if he did not come to willingly talk to them about the incident then they would have to place him on a "whereabouts" list.

In [REDACTED] continued to fight with me about money and telling me I had to work to support the household as he felt entitled to stay at home as I had had [REDACTED] off work due to pregnancy complications and being medically ordered to stop work. Whilst I was at work I would receive a number of phone calls where I could hear [REDACTED] crying loudly and [REDACTED] stating he would put [REDACTED] in the other room and let [REDACTED] cry [REDACTED] to sleep. This caused me so much emotional stress thinking of my young defenseless baby being left to cry. I am unsure if [REDACTED] actually did this to [REDACTED] but it caused me to feel guilty, worried and be distracted whilst at work [REDACTED]

During our argument on the [REDACTED] he told me that he had been married [REDACTED] before, something that was new to me. He also belittled me telling me that I was not marriage material.

On [REDACTED] threatened to kill himself and grabbed a knife which I had to remove from his hands. He stated that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] He then took off in the car leaving me stranded. The pram, car seat and porta-cot were all in the car. I rang my family and asked them to get me out of there, [REDACTED] to rescue myself and [REDACTED] from this ongoing abusive situation. Police were called and whilst in attendance, [REDACTED] made a call to me where I negotiated with him to return to the property. Constable [REDACTED] of [REDACTED] Police was working that day and returned later to attend to [REDACTED] mental state. Whilst the Police Psychiatrist was interviewing [REDACTED] I gathered essential belongings for [REDACTED] and myself and we left [REDACTED]

On [REDACTED] our relationship finally broke down. This is the date that I count our relationship as over, due to the ongoing physical, emotional and financial abuse and domestic violence. I have moved back to my parents' property due to the imminent safety concerns for myself and [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] behavior escalated to making multiple threats of suicide in an attempt to emotionally blackmail me to returning to our home with [REDACTED] With each threat of suicide I contacted police on the 000 number. My phone had been receiving between [REDACTED] calls and text messages from [REDACTED] each day. These messages contained promises of changing, how much he loves me and wants to be a family, then changing to how much he hates me, threats to take [REDACTED] from me.

On the [REDACTED] I attended the property to remove more personal belongings with my father. [REDACTED] physically assaulted me [REDACTED] Police attended and Constables [REDACTED] took a statement as this is a breach of IVO, the [REDACTED] Police are in the process of applying for a full IVO which will include [REDACTED] as an

affected family member. I will be agreeing to a full no contact order as I have no intention of continuing this relationship. They are also in the process of trying to find [REDACTED] in relation to the assault and may be pressing charges on him. Whilst collecting my personal belongings on the [REDACTED] I found hidden documentation of his divorce, including copies of police statements from his then wife of him committing physical abuse to her. These documents were from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] During [REDACTED] we went on a [REDACTED] holiday to [REDACTED] to meet his family. He also told me that he had tax matters to attend to. I found a certificate of attendance at an 'Anger Management course' dated during this time; again him not being honest with me.

I am fearful for [REDACTED] safety and that of my own and my family's safety and [REDACTED] has shown that he is unable to abide by court orders and be a law abiding citizen. [REDACTED] has now learnt how to get around the system and how to dodge the police and other organizations wasting time and energy of the emergency services and community services. I am fearful that even with a full intervention order in place [REDACTED] will still continue to harass and torment me, and I am fearful of him potentially snatching [REDACTED] from my care. No one should have to live in fear, and I have been living in fear due to the physical, psychological, emotional, sexual, economic abuse, fear and isolation this individual has caused me.

To date there is a current full IVO in place including [REDACTED] as a protected person, and the police have questioned him in relation to the latest reports of domestic violence. However only after asking the right question has my mother found out that the file has ended up on the sergeants' desk and he has 21 days to make a decision whether or not to press charges against [REDACTED] No one clearly tells you how the legal process works when you make a statement about domestic violence, instead I have had police tell me that I have to be the one to hide and I have to change my mobile number (which I did due to [REDACTED] wiping my phone and cyber stalking me). Is it acceptable that the people who are meant to protect us are the ones telling us that we are the victim therefore we are the ones that must run and hide ourselves away? How can this happen in a first world country? How is it that the perpetrator is allowed to use the legal system to rob victims of their own basic human rights such as the ability to feel safe? Why must the victim be the one to suffer further by changing phone numbers and potentially going into a refuge to hide for the perpetrator? These individuals need to be prevented from using the victims fear over them, whether this means they are locked up straight away and the legal system speeds up the process of charging them and bringing them before a court or some other idea - it has to be better than allowing them to remain in the community and spread lies about the victim and have their behavior reinforced as being ok due to the delays of the legal system.

In the past I had [REDACTED] the women's referral service contact me via receiving information from the police that there had been incidences of domestic violence, they offered to refer me to councilors which I agreed to however no one ever followed up and my referral

was lost in the system. People are being lost in the system; there is no quick intervention process for the vulnerable, even when I was offered the counseling they told me I would have to at least wait a month before I could see someone. This screams that there are not enough resources available.

At times when [REDACTED] had slammed the door and stormed out leaving me crying in the apartment I rang the [REDACTED] and waiting on hold for over an hour. No one ever answered my call and I was forced to hang up when [REDACTED] returned to the apartment out of fear of him finding out that I was trying to reach out for help.

I have had to leave my apartment and a vast number of possessions for my safety and [REDACTED] protection. Now this person is still living in there and is refusing to give me back my furniture. Due to my understanding as we were living together for longer than 6 months everything is considered 50% ownership, even though he brought the clothes on his back and a laptop to the relationship, he now has all of my furniture that I worked so hard to buy and build myself up with. I was also told that as I left the rental property and he resides there he now has the say on what I can and can't reclaim, and if I don't agree, I have to take him to court. I am now a single mother [REDACTED] how am I meant to have the money to take him to court? As I have also discovered hardly anyone is granted legal aid and a property dispute is not considered urgent court proceedings therefore no legal aid can be sought for this purpose.

I withdrew my immigration sponsorship for [REDACTED] partner visa, and received an email of acknowledgement. This email also stated that due to Australian privacy laws I would not be notified of any outcome. This means that I will never know if [REDACTED] is deported or allowed to remain in Australia. This is causing me anxiety and fear and I feel that I may never know if I will be able to stop looking over my shoulder and if I will ever feel safe again. My family has made multiple phone calls to immigration attempting to figure out the process with no luck and spending more time on hold or hitting brick walls with people who can't even tell us the general process. There has been numerous hours spent trying to find the answers on the internet too.

Immigration, the police, the courts and other services all work separately, there is no or very little cross communication between these organizations. This has caused me to have to repeat my story multiple times and feel that no one understands what hell I have been subjected to. The slow response from all of these organizations has allowed these perpetrators to become wise to the system, they know how to duck and weave and hide from the police and court matters. They learn how to remain "innocent" in society's eyes as they aren't the one that left their home and community, they are still there and able to spread lies and slander about the women who leave as there is no option left.

There needs to be a regulating Government body to communicate with all of the different systems and services to help victims through the mind field of legal jargon and confusion. This Government body will be the first step in empowering victims to fight back using the correct and just process against their attacker and abusers. There is a huge gap in support for victims in relation to talking to police and getting answers to their questions, immigration matters either as the sponsor or sponsored party, civil, criminal and family court proceedings, and even further support when talking to other countries in relation to their past domestic violence perpetrators. As a victim I feel strongly that there needs to be a nationwide register of these perpetrators and potentially a listing of those who are under investigation for domestic violence and still awaiting court proceedings. I have seen charges been dropped for no reason other than laziness of not providing a brief of evidence and clerical errors, this is unfair and unjust and how can we have this happen? This is not good enough and only reinforces the behavior, allowing them to see how easy it is for charges to be dropped or lost in the system.

I also feel strongly that there needs to be some sort of long term rehabilitation process, however in my situation it seems that the perpetrator already underwent this and in less than 12 months was doing the same again. The system needs to identify those who are first time offenders and have a process of rehabilitating them and teaching them to not act in these violent and abusive ways. However repeat offenders need harsher punishments.

I would like to point out a legal short coming. If I was punched by another person whilst down the street where members of the community can witness this the person attacking me would be arrested on the spot and questioned. They would most likely be charged with criminal charges such as aggravated assault and reckless intent to cause injury. However behind closed doors if the same assault was to occur the police first apply for an IVO and then may or may not take the person into questioning if they are still at the property this occurred at, they would tell the victim that this is firstly a civil matter and criminal charges may occur when reviewed by their Sargent. My experience has shown the lack of concern that the perpetrator has run out of the apartment and is now within the public. It seemed that no real efforts to alert the public that this person was wanted for questioning or could be in the local area. I myself had to once take police to the apartment to give them access to it to serve court orders of the IVO summons as the perpetrator would refuse to answer the door to police and ignore their phone calls if they phoned him.

There is a society stigma towards victims that it is somehow our fault and that we have allowed these things to happen to us. I never asked to be choked, force to have sex, head butted, knives pulled on me, abused, assaulted, stalked and harassed. I never asked for any of these things to happen to me. However I am a victim of domestic violence and society not only places a taboo on this subject but also tells me that because I stayed, I allowed this to happen. I was told that

the magic number is '8'. 8 times a women will leave and come back before she finally breaks free of her abuser. I left and returned [REDACTED] times before I finally left or I would be another statistic of another women dead at her partners hands. These statistics are shocking and need to be made public knowledge to help break down the stigma victims' face and allow people to assist victims rather than judge them.

People need to walk in my shoes before they can make such harsh and unfair judgements on a women who loved a man and wanted to raise [REDACTED] with [REDACTED] dad, a women who stayed because she was scared, isolated and had all of her confidence taken from her. Society shames the victim and it is that shame and embarrassment that caused me to almost end up dead at the hands of the man I loved. That shame and embarrassment almost prevented me from reaching out to my family who has always been there for me, but I had become isolated from them.

This taboo is one of the most damaging things in our current society and we need to empower victims and punish the perpetrator rather than allowing the opposite to happen. This stigma of shame needs to be broken, or more women will stay and more women will die at the hands of their partner.

Help us break the taboo of family/domestic violence

Regards

[REDACTED]