

1/5/15

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To whom it may concern,

I felt very privileged to be able to represent Good Shepherd at the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

There are just a few more points that I would like to add as I was unable to discuss them as the table that I was on ran out of time.

One of the challenges that I have found in my work with families that have been affected by family violence is that families have support services in place eg - family services, Moralla, flu worker, respite, school, C.P. etc. ^{PELHMS} The family (mum and children) relocate due to family violence and the services cease due to not being in area. The family then need to re refer and start again on the waiting list. Also not all councils and areas have the same level of support.

Another issue that I have dealt with is that the significant mental health / challenging behaviours of the mother and children, all having a negative impact on each other. This can eventually lead to a parent having a psychotic episode which hospitalization is required and therefore the children are removed temporarily which then causes more trauma for the family.

Another issue - once the family have then relocated and the family is supported for a time, support services eventually cease. Once crisis is over, there is a gap in services years later when more support is needed, the family do not know where to access services. This has happened to a few of my clients during my 10 years as a case manager working with various non for profit organisations.

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On another note, I would also like to add a little of my own personal story.

I grew up in a family violence situation. I experienced family violence from my father and older brother. My family also went to church each Sunday. We looked good in public but it was so different at home. I was brought up to believe men ruled the world and women were silent. They just did what they were told.

I eventually married a man who was also abusive in every sense. I wanted to leave the marriage but I felt trapped. Part of me feeling trapped was due to my so called Christian belief that God didn't like marriage and I had to obey. I have since changed my belief system, still believe in God but not that men have the control.

I have been diagnosed with PTSD, anxiety and panic attacks. I have received much counselling and therapy over the years which has been very beneficial for my growth and healing.

What I still find hard to deal with is the hypervigilance and the triggers that I have. The triggers can happen any time and this causes significant anxiety to me.

I am currently again receiving professional support in giving me more strategies in dealing with the triggers. I believe that this will always be a part of my journey.

I was strong enough to go to the police after the separation and obtain an IVO for a period of 12 months. I have now been divorced for 14 years in Dec 2015.

My only regret was not going to the police during the marriage and report the abuse/rape. I was too ashamed

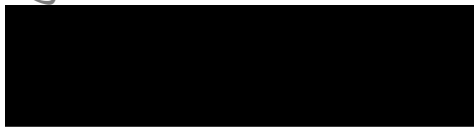
to do this, ^{rather than the marriage and divorce} as I would be seen a bitter ex wife. ⁽³⁾

My ex husband then remarried, but I have since found out that his second marriage has failed due to the same - family violence.

I was married for 5 years, it was not a very happy marriage, as my husband was very abusive + controlling.

I feel empowered to be able to share a little of my story / journey.

Yours sincerely,



Jenny Sims
(survivor of family violence)