

My name is [REDACTED]. I have experienced domestic violence inside my relationship with my children's father and ongoing abuse following the breakdown of our relationship.

A 12 month I.V.O was taken out against my ex partner by police in [REDACTED], continued by myself in [REDACTED] and is ongoing to this day.

The police have attended my home many times. Each time I have been abused by my ex partner. The attending police seem to not be interested in the I.V.O, and only interested in what I have done to my ex partner to cause this abuse. I have attended the police station many times to make a complaint. Sometimes my complaint was written down as a statement, most times not at all. The police appeared more interested to know what I had done to cause these situations to begin with.

- My ex partner came to my home. It was our youngest daughters [REDACTED]th birthday. My ex partner proceeded to assault and abuse me. My family called triple 0. It took over an hour for the police to attend. I was assaulted and abused the whole time. Our home was emergency accommodation and I was unaware it was known to police. We had been there [REDACTED] months. I was beyond traumatised. 6 or 7 police officers attended that day. I was made to give a statement there and then. I recall watching them all stand together in a circle in my lounge while I sat leaning on a wall. I noticed there was no female in that group. I noticed nobody seemed to care that I was so hurt. I watched the officers discuss trivial things. 2 family members that had been with me were supporting my children. My family were not allowed to give statements as they were not independent witnesses. I do recall thinking that the group required somebody who had experience in grief counselling of some form. I recall wondering why only men were sent. I felt somewhat intimidated. I will say the police supported me and placed the first intervention order on my ex partner on my behalf. I had to attend a place where my injuries were photographed and documented. That report as well as the hospital report were not allowed in court. The police stated that I couldn't prove that my injuries occurred at the time I was assaulted.
- My children were being returned after an access visit. My ex partner returned my 2 [REDACTED], but decided he was keeping our [REDACTED]. I called the police to assist. While waiting I was subjected to a lot of verbal abuse by my ex partner. When the police arrived the attending officer allowed my [REDACTED] to leave. The attending police officer ignored that I was the custodial parent, agreed court ordered access times and an I.V.O. were also ignored. I requested the Federal Police to be called. I was told to call them myself. I was threatened by the attending police officer that I would be charged with creating a public nuisance. I asked the police officer what he would create if his child was being taken. I then had to watch my [REDACTED] leave, as I was blocked by the officer meant to help me. My ex partner smirking. My [REDACTED] watching.
- My ex partner was inside my home assaulting me. The neighbours called the police afraid for their own safety. The police attended my home. At this point my door was off its hinges as my ex partner broke in. I had my clothes torn from me. I put on a dressing gown given to me by one of my children as I answered the door. The attending police stated my neighbours called, one of my neighbours were concerned that my ex partner would cross the road to hurt them. I told the police officer that my ex partner was too busy. One police officer wanted to confirm my ex partner would not cross the road to harm my neighbours. I looked around the surrounding door frame of the broken door, half flapped my dressing gown and

assured them my ex partner wasn't going to be crossing the road, he was too busy. They left. They asked no further questions. They did not help me or return. I took photos of my home and of the injuries I sustained. Later I was told I could not make a complaint and press charges as this was a family issue. I tried to explain this was break and enter and assault, my ex partner lived domestically with someone else. I was told there are no independent witnesses and my children cannot make a statement against their own father. Although I did not want my children to make statements at their young ages. Nobody cared.

- My ex partner attended my home on the day I was fleeing. My ex partner grabbed me around the throat, hurting me. The person helping me move grabbed a baseball bat and used it to defend me. My ex partner left. The police were called. I requested the police stay until I could pack the [REDACTED]. At this time I was told the police are not baby sitters. I was concerned my ex partner would return. I was told by the attending police officer that if my ex partner returned, my children would be taken into services as I keep them in domestic violence. I tried to explain my intervention order, I showed it, and it was obvious I was fleeing. There was no help. I tried to explain that this was assault, my ex partner lived domestically with someone else. Afraid of losing my children, I left my belongings that had not made it onto the [REDACTED]. Shut the door, never to return. Considering this was emergency accommodation, we didn't own the furniture, crockery or cutlery in the home. The boxes we left behind were our only belongings. I attempted to press charges on my ex partner. The police officer told me that if I do my ex partner will be pressing charges and I WILL be charged with aiding and abetting an assault. This would be on my file if anyone ever done a police check on me. I recall asking will this say that this was an assault on me. The police officer said no, just assault. I tried to ask how I could possibly assist in my own assault, the police officer didn't care. I was scared of the impact on my future work possibilities. I did not press charges.
- I was unaware my ex partner was searching for me one day. I had been on a family day out with my children, my partner and his family and my children's friends from school. My ex partner turned up at my mother's house in the evening. To protect everybody else I went outside. I was assaulted. The police were called. The attending police officers were given a story from my ex partner that I had been caught having an affair that day. We in fact had been separated for over [REDACTED] years at this stage. Both of us were in separate relationships with other people. They allowed him to leave my mothers premises. The attending male police officer yelled at me that I had provoked my ex partner due to the affair. I recall trying to say that it wasn't real and if it was, provocation is not an excuse to harm another. This police officer yelled at me alot. My partner at the time stepped in to verbally defend me. I asked the attending female police officer to please do the right thing in this situation. I will never forget her look of fear towards the attending male officer. She wasn't going to help me. The police stated that my ex partner admitted to them he had a psychotic episode due to discovering my affair. I tried to highlight concern for the public if he was supposedly in the middle of an episode. I requested these police officers attend my home with me. I was concerned my ex partner would be waiting. They refused and left.
- On the same night and occasion as above I went home to collect belongings to flee. My ex partner arrived; I locked the doors to my home, staying inside. I had my eldest 2 children with me. My neighbours called the police. My ex partner verbally abused my children and I at my door until the police arrived. Immediately my ex partner told them that this situation

isn't as bad as it looks. I was just going off, creating a scene. At this point I yelled from behind my security door to the officers that "there was a woman and children hiding behind a locked door, not allowing him in. Hopefully they had done some research. If they couldn't read this situation properly they were f***** in the brain. Look." The attending police officers allowed my ex partner to hop in his car and leave. They then came back to my door to discuss the affair I had been caught having, and it was reasonable my ex partner was upset. I made these particular officers come inside my home, I asked them to look at the various stages of family photos on the walls. He is missing. He left over 5 years ago. I am in a relationship; I am not having an affair. The police officers stayed while we packed a bag each and 1 for my youngest child. The police officers followed me to my mother's home to collect my youngest child. I was told by the officers to hide for a few days. The police officers drove behind us as far as [REDACTED] (some 20 minutes), I was going to the other side of the city to stay with my sister. I contacted the police the following day to make a complaint and press charges of assault. I was told that this was a dispute during access change over that got out of hand, that is all. The police officer would not listen that there was no access visit that day. I do not understand why this was written up incorrectly.

- After the above episode I went as far as writing Mine and my ex partners full name, phone numbers and addresses on a paper, making an info poster. I took it to my local police station. My intention was to flag our names. I asked that the poster be placed where it can be seen. Please consider the poster if by chance my name or address is highlighted to a call. I have since attended that same police station to make statements of complaint. I have called the police to my home due to safety concerns. I can't say what happened to that piece of paper or even if it was put on the wall in the police station. It has never been mentioned again.
- I have been subjected to many many many phone calls of threats and abuse. I have on numerous occasions gone to the police to get this to stop. I have been treated as a joke. "How did I know my ex partner called" my answer was because I answered the phone. I was told if I didn't answer the phone there was no breach. So, when I didn't answer the phone but complained he was calling I was told "Well you don't answer the phone so how do you know it really is him. It could be anybody". I made numerous statements that resulted in my ex partner being warned and myself receiving a letter to state there was no evidence of a breach. I took photos of my phone, kept diaries of messages and phone calls. The police simply warned my ex partner and the matter was dropped supposedly.
- I have called the police in fear. Believing my ex partner is on his way. There has been no attendance, simply because there is no real issue at that point. My ex partner was not contacted by police at this time.

The police seemed unable to treat these situations and many others appropriately time and time again. My I.V.O was ignored time and time again. Often I was asked what I had done to cause my ex partner to behave this way. It seemed unbelievable that I had done nothing, or had no contact. If I had asserted my own defence then I had added to the situation or caused it by defending myself. If a female officer attended she appeared to give authority to her male colleague, leaving me still powerless and with no support. The attending police officers seemed to lack concern for my safety or family. It appeared that at times situations were grossly downplayed or written up in a police report incorrectly. I can't say if that was to save

from doing paperwork or lack of concern. The police appeared to lack empathy and had no understanding of trauma, grief or domestic violence. At times the police appeared to support my ex partner after I had been abused. My ex partner often told me he was above the law and the police won't touch him. I can say I begun to believe it may be true as much as he believed it. As recently as [REDACTED] I have made complaints and statements regarding abusive texts and phone calls. My ex partner is given a warning by the police. I do not understand why my I.V.O has never been honoured. I do not understand why abuse has been allowed to continue despite many complaints, obvious physical abuse and police attendance. I believe the police need to uphold the theory of protection of the community far better. I do not understand after so many varied complaints why my ex partner receives a warning – still. It silences him for a short time it does not protect me or uphold my I.V.O

- I attempted to contact various services for my children to receive support. Always we were put on a waiting list usually 6, 10, 12 months long. Most times we didn't hear back at all. Maybe falling through the cracks I am not sure. It is difficult when you require services NOW for trauma but are told to wait many months or a year.
- I attended 1 particular service in [REDACTED] only 3 times. [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]. They have since changed the name of business It was decided by the lady (I refuse to say councillor) that I needed to write a letter of apology to my [REDACTED]. My son had moved from my home aged [REDACTED] nearly [REDACTED] into his father's home in [REDACTED]. I did not argue this process. I wanted to know access times and when my children would spend time together. My [REDACTED] stopped speaking to me within 2 weeks. My ex partner claimed he had nothing to do with it. My [REDACTED] and I attended court ordered counselling. Separately at first, with the intent of joining together supported by this service. I had to write a written letter to apologise that my ex partner left. I had to apologise my [REDACTED] grew up in a female dominated house; I had to apologise that I disciplined my [REDACTED] ever and I had to apologise that I had ever asked [REDACTED] to do the dishes. I refused to write this letter. When the lady told me she would write it for me, I refused to sign it. This lady then decided I was not allowed to attend sessions again until I agreed to write and sign this letter. It is now 2015: I am still estranged from my [REDACTED]. He is now [REDACTED]. He is still angry. He has told me I am to blame. He now feels I do not need to just apologise for the last [REDACTED] years that he has been estranged and angry with me, I need to apologise for the whole [REDACTED] years.

It seems nearly impossible to get into services when you need them. A waiting list of many months is a hard thing to endure for a family in crisis. I believe if my children had have been supported properly, able to talk through how they feel and process things adequately things may have turned out differently within my family relations. It appeared to me the services often wanted to control not just the direction counselling went but the entire process. Although I understand this is somewhat necessary, I feel it is important for these services to listen to the needs and emotions of the people involved. How appropriate is it that I write an apology letter for my ex nearly [REDACTED] years after he has left me and I was the one being/still being abused. Services seemed unable to see through manipulation. Often believing my ex partner whom could be very charming when the need arose. Often I was told that I was putting words in my children's mouths. My ex partner claimed I did this and I made them lie. My children saw events. My children experienced abuse and trauma alongside me and away

from me when alone with their father when he was questioning them about our lives or what I was doing. They witnessed my being hurt. On one occasion my own [REDACTED] year old [REDACTED] tried to defend me physically against [REDACTED] own father. It is fair to say that I was emotional at any time through counselling or family report sessions. My ex partner appeared calm in family report sessions. That doesn't mean I am the one with the problem. It is nearly impossible to not emotionally react to the traumatic events, conversations and situation. The differing emotions displayed by people should highlight all is not as it seems. These things have long lasting effects on people.

- We used [REDACTED] and my children went into supervised contact with their father at two points of time. It took a long time for our names to have a placement. During these times I was further abused due to 'keeping my children from their father' and the length of time contact took.

The [REDACTED] report was instrumental to deciding if my children were safe unsupervised with their father. I had to make a decision before court and not receive that [REDACTED] paperwork. I chose to allow my children to have unsupervised contact. That report had information within that was concerning. I would not have agreed to unsupervised contact if this was made available to me prior to court proceedings.

- Family report writing is a very stressful situation. We were in a very small townhouse home turned office. Small rooms to wait in, no security cameras and 1 door out. 1 kitchen and bathroom, to be shared by those attending. This situation is emotional anyway, added with fear for my own security and lack of promised safety and support. The family report writer is busy interviewing in her office so does not see the game of cat and mouse or intimidation people may be going through.

Family report writing buildings should have full security with cctv and audio in every room. It may give the report writer insight and a clearer picture of the truth to evaluate conversation and behaviour after the interviews are completed. There should be more people than just the report writer in attendance in the building for the protection of individuals. I can't say I understand why people are made to be in such close proximity if there has been a history of violence. Again any I.V.O seems irrelevant in this situation. It is an anxious situation to be in if you have experienced domestic violence. In my experience the report writer seems to be unable to identify that people may be reacting to the situation and closeness of a possible attacker. They may be emotional, they may find it hard to talk or communicate clearly. I know I personally sat blowing raspberries in the air in one particular family report, not because I was trying to be silly. I was losing a grip emotionally as well as mentally. I could not speak. I wanted to run, I had to fight that urge, Just outside the door and before the front door was my ex and his partner. While I was in the interview, my children were vulnerable to any conversation outside the room I was in. I was a blubbing mess and this was not appropriately seen. I was just trying to breathe. I was not supported. It is written in my family report that I seem to care more about my own feelings than assisting my children to see their father. I have put myself in many risky situations just so my children could have access to their father. The father wasn't always interested in access of the children even if he officially stated it was his only priority. My safety never seemed to be an issue for anybody else except for when I refused to place myself at risk for access purposes.

- We attended so many court proceedings. Sometimes 2 or 3 in one year. This went on for just over a decade.....

When are Final Orders exactly that: Final Orders. My ex partner would initiate court proceedings on the basis he wanted to see his children. He would also state that I was keeping them from him. Sometimes straight after court he would ignore those access orders – just made. He often stopped seeing the children. On 2 occasions going for a couple of years without contact. I felt that the court system was used against me as a further form of emotional abuse. It was used to further traumatise myself and also my children who had to attend children's solicitor's appointments and family reports. It was very very hard for my children. It appeared to not matter how often I stated he ignored his own access orders and then blamed me when it suited him. Even noting these things in a diary wasn't helpful. I constantly had to battle the belief and stigma that I was keeping the children from my ex partner. My children's safety was a concern for me. I tried many times to highlight this fact. Nobody listened. Although it was documented they must have witnessed violence for what they said. They also reported being yelled at, being scared. My children were often verbally abused and terrified. I called Children's 1st at one point. I can not even say if they checked on the welfare of my children with their father. My ex partner claimed to have a mental illness. This seemed to be a reason to allow him to get away with violence and harm towards us. This was an excuse used time again and accepted by services, police and courts. I think it should have been a highlight of concern and the possibility my children were at some form of risk but it wasn't taken that way. Instead it was claimed I added to his mental illness by having my children live with me and ensuring their safety. Which I did not do adequately as I could not.

My children are aged [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] now. I am still going through forms of emotional and mental abuse concerning their father. Although nowhere near as often or as intense as when they were younger. They are all too old for court orders now. I am estranged from my [REDACTED]. My [REDACTED] children do not have the relationship they had when young. In essence my family was torn apart. Emotionally at times I could barely save myself let alone assist them to work things out.

Domestic violence is a sinister thing that permeates many parts of your life. No matter how you try to keep a lid on it and behave normal when nothing is normal around you. Leaving the relationship is not then a magic wand of violence is over. It begins an extra step if it wasn't begun before. It is a mental war, an emotional war of police, courts, solicitors and services.