

# Victorian Royal Commission into Domestic Violence

Submission by [REDACTED]

March 20, 2015

I write to you as a father, a man and as a human being located in [REDACTED] Australia.

[REDACTED] years ago I became a single full time father. Not by the loss of life of [REDACTED] mother [REDACTED], but by the choice she made to evict me and our [REDACTED] from the family home.

Throughout the relationship I was the victim of Domestic Violence (physical, financial, emotional and psychological). There were a number of occasions where I contacted the police to come to the premises and to my shock I was removed from the property because she would start crying.

The last time we broke up, she threw me out and told me to take [REDACTED] I was happy to leave by then and knew I didn't have to come back because she gave me the only reason I ever returned to such an abusive relationship; [REDACTED]

I was staying at a friend's place sharing my room with [REDACTED]; [REDACTED] was only [REDACTED] months old at the time. I took [REDACTED] to see [REDACTED] mum and [REDACTED] ( [REDACTED] ) every day or two; I believed it was important for their relationship to be maintained.

After a couple of weeks realizing the distress [REDACTED] was going through, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] moved into her mother's place so [REDACTED] and I could return to the family home.

[REDACTED] weeks later [REDACTED] fell sick and I had a friend over who was helping me and giving me pointers, in turn improving my confidence in my own parenting ability. Later that day, [REDACTED] came over with [REDACTED] I was on one couch comforting [REDACTED] and my friend [REDACTED] was on the other. Immediately, [REDACTED] began to abuse [REDACTED] and I. I passed [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] hoping that [REDACTED] would clam her down but it didn't work. I walked [REDACTED] our as she said she was leaving and stood at the curb side in front of her parked car. Throughout this time, [REDACTED] kept up with the abuse as we walked outside and literally threw [REDACTED] to me from the footpath; two meters away. I watched as [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] then got into their car. I remember talking to [REDACTED] and her expression changed as [REDACTED] swerved her car at us from the opposite side of the road missing my leg by inches.

I walked back inside with [REDACTED] and spent some time calming [REDACTED] down to get some sleep. Scared for our safety I latched the door and set up a video camera on a shelf between two picture frames. I had been attacked so many times before that I thought this was my last and only option.

The inevitable occurred, [REDACTED] unlocked the door and the latched hooked on. She asked me to unlock the door so we could talk. I pressed record on the video camera and proceeded to the door. As soon as [REDACTED] entered the house she started punching me in the face with keys between her knuckles, kicking then biting me as I tried to cover my face which was now bleeding. I guess when she thought I had had enough she left, [REDACTED]. I checked on [REDACTED] to see if [REDACTED] was still safe and then called the Vic Police.

When the Police arrived sometime after the assault, they told me to wash the blood from my face and to relax, "It's not that bad". They soon changed their tune when I showed them the footage of a [REDACTED] woman attacking [REDACTED] man like it was a street fight.

I was told not to wash off the blood as they needed photos. The Victoria Police then applied for an Intervention Order to protect [REDACTED] and myself from any further violence.

I contacted the Domestic Violence Refuge Centre and was told that I was not welcome because of my gender (male) but I could drop [REDACTED] off. I responded by informing them that [REDACTED] has been through enough without losing another parent.

I was able to move on with raising [REDACTED] whilst [REDACTED] had supervised visitation.

Over time I have realised there are no specific services for fathers in my situation, even with the growing number of fathers raising children alone. I made contact with the local government and they, along with a community health organisation, assisted me in starting [REDACTED] which is an incorporated association providing a social, supportive and educational network for fathers and their children. The programs that we run include; [REDACTED] and a [REDACTED] which assists fathers with practical support in a single parent family focusing on Maslow's hierarchy of needs and advocacy with other welfare providers. Since founding this organisation, I have been the humble recipient of a number of community awards for the volunteer work I do.

What I find concerning is the negative way men are still portrayed within society and within families. We as men are often painted with the same brush when ill-informed people misconstrue statistics and form emotionally biased opinions. Here in Australia there is a belief amongst some that men get every opportunity and women do not. That domestic violence and intimate-partner murders are a man's problem and men need to be stopped. I am a man. I am not violent. I believe there are more differences between two individual people than there are between a man and a woman.

I cannot quote exact domestic violence statistics because there are so many varying research papers but I can quote what information I came across last year.

The National Institute of Criminology statistics show that there were 122 intimate-partner murders over the financial years of 2008/09 and 2009/10 with an average of 61 per year over those two years. An average of 37 victims (61%) were women but 24 (39%) were men.

With the national growth of single parent families headed by fathers being 86,000 in 2006 to 158,688 in 2011 at a growth rate of 14% per year, we estimate that this year there are over 260,000 single parent families headed by fathers.

I am concerned by the lack of support for these fathers and their children, as there are no refuges in Victoria for fathers to care for their children in a safe, secure

environment. Additionally, there is no transitional-housing, nor sufficiently funded practical support services available.

Thank you for your time.

