

The relationship between the father of my [REDACTED] and myself was very toxic. It was getting progressively worse as the years went by and unfortunately the [REDACTED] were exposed to family violence since birth.

A massive contribution to the family violence was that the father was a habitual marijuana user and occasionally used the hard substances and then 'ice'.

Once realizing that the family was not together anymore we mutually agreed that we would separate.

There was not any physical violence but many a time when I thought "I don't know how he stopped himself from hitting me".

I always vowed if he ever hit me I would leave him instantly I wasn't aware that family violence was not only physical assaults.

There was a lot of verbal abuse and emotional abuse which is why it took me longer to leave the relationship.

The day I left [REDACTED] was when I was fed up with the [REDACTED] having to witness the father's erratic behavior and I was increasingly feeling threatened by him. The verbal abuse was disgusting, he was always angry with me, moody, bullying, putting me down etc.

It took a lot of strength and courage to leave with the [REDACTED] but I knew that I was lucky to have the support from my mum and dad. I wouldn't know where I would go if I didn't have them.

When I did leave, the father was constantly phoning to speak to the [REDACTED], he was harassing myself and my parents. It was constant.

The verbal abuse increased.

He punched my car with his fist – left a dent mark.

He threatened me, "Ill fucking stab you, you fucking bitch".

Whilst having the 'Interim intervention order' the father has breached the order leaving abusive text and voicemail messages on the phone.

I reported it to the police and the police would speak to him and warn him to back off.

I went to the [REDACTED] police station so many times and eventually a policeman took a statement ([REDACTED])

After obtaining a full intervention order in [REDACTED]; I again attended the police station to report a constant barrage of abusive calls and text messages.

Constable [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] took the second statement [REDACTED] and I finally felt someone was on my side. She was great.

It took a while but eventually he was charged with several counts of breaching in [REDACTED].

In [REDACTED], he was convicted of breaching the IVO and was ordered to serve a community corrections order and attend a Men's Behaviour Change program. Honestly don't know how a 10-12 week course can have profound impact in such a short time frame.

All the while, he was fixated on the breakdown of our relationship as I did not intend of depriving him from seeing the children.

I went back to the police station to report incidences but because I didn't have proof nothing was valid.

There were many more abusive text messages, however I have not reported them to the police because I have felt overwhelmed by the court process and not sure what else I could do under the circumstances.

██████████, I made an application to extend the IVO as it was due to expire and I did not trust him at handovers. The tirade of criticism and name calling at handovers was still there.

Since he had been charged and convicted of breach of the IVO the constant contact over text messages continued although the severity of the abuse had decreased.

I was still concerned, that without the protection of an order that he would revert to constant verbal abuse especially while there are Family Law proceedings.

██████████, the application to extend the intervention order was granted.

When applying for the extension of IVO the ██████████ Magistrates' Court - I am very thankful & grateful to ██████████ – the Community Lawyer from ██████████ Community Legal Centre. She was thorough, genuinely helpful, sincere, concerned and assisted me over and beyond than I expected.

I think initially when the family violence Intervention Orders are made it should be more than 12 months. At least 2 years.

Especially, when the respondent is a habitual drug user. They do not change their pattern of behavior over night and possibly ever if they haven't given up the addiction.

Whilst dealing with family violence and the many other processes in mediation, lawyers, family law, applying for an IVO, reporting to the police is all very overwhelming.

I felt very frustrated with the law and it's processes because it's very black and white. What about the grey area that involves the children?

How can mediation promote the father to see the children when they are the perpetrators? They are abusive and disrespectful towards the mother in front of the children. He is the drug user.

I feel that there needs to be a more accurate way of drug testing (not urine testing). Particularly if they use the harder drugs – 'Ice'.

Some of the police that I was dealing with were dismissive, I felt like I was brushed off a lot of the times when I went to report a breach.

How is it when your own lawyer has a discussion with the other party's barrister and then warns me and it is "here say" that the father may harm himself and someone else.

I feel that there is so much legal abuse out there too. Sometimes the lawyers don't hear you and they are also black and white.

It feels like the family violence part is brushed aside and they continue to negotiate as per normal.

The father has a right too yet he is the perpetrator.

What about the children's rights? The parents have a responsibility.

As a victim, besides family and friends support, I found it very difficult to find support from the outside.

I needed more than just talking to someone. I needed guidance.

I am currently attending a women's group at the [REDACTED] Community health centre.

It's a family violence prevention program facilitated by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

This program helps you become a stronger person. From a victim, thriver, to survivor.

I highly recommend this invaluable program. I wish I had of known about it sooner in my separation.

I think all judges, lawyers, mediators, police, everyone involved should be educated in this program.