



The Commissioner
Royal Commission into Family Violence
P.O. Box 535
Flinders Lane
Melbourne VIC 8009

21st March 2015

Submission to the Royal Commission into Family Violence (Email)

Dear Commissioner,

I am writing to you following the announcement of the Royal Commission into Family Violence.

I originally commenced this letter last year, after watching an episode of Four Corners covering the story of Luke and Rosie Batty. This story touched me, as I have experienced continuous and sustained family violence from my father throughout my childhood. Like Rosie, I have felt powerless, alone and without credibility.

I am concerned that the Royal Commission will overlook the impact of family violence upon children, as family violence is largely seen as a women's' or a spousal issue rather than a family or community issue. Further to this, I would like to make a positive change to the way in which family violence is addressed and I feel that I can provide some insight with regards to the Royal Commission's terms of reference.

My father was, and still is, an alcoholic. Throughout my childhood, he physically, verbally and emotionally abused my mother, my two siblings and me. At the time, I felt that the death of at least one of us was inevitable, rather than probable. Upon reflection, I feel that it is down to sheer luck that I did not end up like Luke.

I am the eldest of three children and felt my role within my family was as a parent, protecting my mother, brother and sister. On numerous occasions my siblings and I attempted to secure the assistance of police, teachers, friends and neighbours. Of all of these people, I felt most let down by the police, who were ill

equipped to provide assistance when we needed it the most. Our emergency calls were considered prank calls and a response was often delayed. On one occasion the officer on duty called us back 3 hours after we had placed an emergency call to query whether we still needed help. When police did attend, we were seldom spoken to and then only in the presence of my father, the perpetrator. He goaded us to contact the police for help, as he knew my mother would not press charges and his violence could not be stopped.

When raising the issue with others, I was considered a liar and an attention seeker. Those who I thought were my friends acted as if it were a joke, ringing the house to antagonize my father. Teachers and other parents did not want to get involved, as they did not consider it to be their responsibility. Upon raising the issue with Centrelink, there seemed to be no information available on children's' rights, no options available to leave a violent home and no counselors to speak to who were accessible to me. I was torn; yearning to escape my situation, terrified that further harm would come to my mother and siblings if I were not there to protect them. I considered committing a serious crime, sufficient to have me placed in juvenile detention or jail as a means of escape, however the responsibility I felt to my mother and siblings stopped me from pursuing what I feared was a selfish course of action.

My father's behaviour has affected every aspect of my life. It negatively impacted my school attendance, results and participation in extracurricular activities, such as sport, debutante balls and formals. It prohibited me from making and maintaining friendships. It has limited my opportunities and crushed my self-confidence.

As a result of the Royal Commission into Family Violence, I would like to see:

- Improved ability for police to prosecute perpetrators.
- Adequate training for police, teachers and doctors to assist families.
- Increased consultation with children regarding their wishes.
- Provision of safe and secure foster care for children who cannot live with their family as a result of domestic violence.
- Greater availability of information regarding support to those experiencing domestic violence.
- Effective record keeping and communication between government bodies, police, schools and medical practitioners in order to prevent or stem domestic violence.

In order to prevent family violence in future, I believe that there should be a focus on family relationships as part of sex/life education at school, as well as greater prosecution of general violence and antisocial behaviour, leading to jail time rather than suspended sentences.

I am now twenty seven years old, in a professional career and trying to move on with my life. There remains a stigma associated with having experienced family

violence, particularly in the corporate world where it stems career development, being seen as a weakness or a source of emotional instability. Despite this, after leaving home at eighteen and having experienced much of what is only touched on in the media, I feel that I am obligated to speak out to prevent this happening to others.

I am entrusting you with my voice and hope that you may ensure that it is represented at the Royal Commission into Family Violence. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of any further assistance, or should you wish to discuss further.

Yours faithfully,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the sender.