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Family Violence

My name is [REDACTED]. I have [REDACTED] children [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Background Information

I left an [REDACTED] year relationship on [REDACTED], this was an extremely difficult decision given the constant threats I was living with. I had tried to leave a couple of times throughout the years but was always lured back by the promise of change. The abuse I suffered was physical on a few occasions but the emotional and psychological abuse on a daily basis was debilitating.

I was continually threatened that if I ever left I would never see our children again, the way the father said this to me scared me, I didn't know what context he meant and didn't want to find out. The father is very clever at ensuring his abuse is difficult to prove and has continued to push the boundaries.

I was in fear and believed I had no other option than to accept my situation. I believed that the children needed both their mum and dad together, I didn't think at the time that leaving was an option. I spoke to my doctor about how to cope in this situation.

The father has [REDACTED] from his first marriage, he had often stated that he wanted to take [REDACTED] as he had the means to hide [REDACTED] with his extended family. He often commented that it would have been cheaper to have his ex-wife killed and bragged that he could get it done by a mate that had bikie connections. It was these comments that worried me and I believed his constant threats.

My life had become the following:

- Comments of "how could anyone love you and that he should just go find someone else".
- Comments that he wouldn't marry me until I got along with his daughter.
- While pregnant he threw a glass of cold water over me in anger. Threw items at me, kicked me in the head if I chose to sleep in another room.
- While [REDACTED] months pregnant he grabbed me by the neck in the kitchen & punched me on the arm leaving bruising.
- I was given a budget that I was to strictly follow, any waiver from this and I would get a phone call asking why I had got the kids new shoes or a haircut when I was at the shops.
- He played the stock market and would continuously gamble away money including emptying the children's bank accounts.

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- He managed all financials and kept this from me.
- We were not able to go out unless his daughter was visiting from interstate.
- I was continually ridiculed for the way I dressed or told I should put more effort into dressing nice or getting my hair done.
- Assaulted [REDACTED] who was [REDACTED] at the time over the head as he was annoyed with [REDACTED] playing the computer.
- I was isolated from family and friends.
- He told me he knew how the court system worked and he would ensure that I would have nothing, and he would have everything including the children.
- Threatened that he had bikie connections in [REDACTED] and could easily have someone killed.
- So many arguments I have lost count, he would follow me around the house trying to get me to join him in a yelling match. He would make sure the children could hear him putting me down.
- I often found myself questioning if he was purposely creating arguments for his own agenda.
- Constantly put me down to the children and questioned the children as to why they loved me.
- Dismissed my aboriginal heritage and scoffed at my involvement in the community. The children began questioning their cultural being.
- Within minutes of giving birth to [REDACTED] he told me I should of given him a boy and that he wouldn't marry me.
- Constantly told me to have an abortion when I found out I was pregnant with our son.
- He would constantly tell me how unhappy and depressed I was.
- He seemed to have manic episodes, one evening he had come to bed late after spending hours crying and trying to sleep under the [REDACTED]

I was always left feeling defeated and tired of the constant pressure to get things done like cleaning and feeding, bathing and getting the children in bed just to save another argument about what I had, or hadn't done for the day. I was feeling worthless, I didn't know how much longer I could keep blocking out his many taunts.

I attended my GP and spoke about what was happening, my GP asked if I could leave and I said I had no choice I had to stay. It was not an option. My GP prescribed anti-depressants to be able to cope. I looked at the box and cried. I didn't want to take them, I didn't need to take them the bigger picture was I needed to leave. He

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had stripped me of everything for too long I needed and deserved to be happy, the children deserved to be happy and they were clearly not in this environment.

The decision was made easier on [REDACTED] when I witnessed the father grab [REDACTED] aggressively, he ripped off [REDACTED] and smacked her hard on the bum. [REDACTED] was screaming, and came to me for safety, this infuriated the father who went on a rampage. He ripped her arm away from me and yelled at me "you're lucky your here coz I would of bet the F***** shit out of her", he went on ranting that she'll get nothing from him including [REDACTED]. It was horrible to watch and harder to keep my silence as I knew from experience speaking up would make it a lot worse, she was [REDACTED] and there was no need for that aggression. This was reported to the Family Violence Hotline.

I went to work the next day with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] as they had asked that I not leave them home with their dad. I knew at this point that it was having an effect on the children and I decided things needed to change. I spoke to the father about the incident, he showed no remorse.

I asked the father if he would go stay somewhere for a week or so, as I believed we needed a break and it was best for the children to stay in their home. He refused this so I packed an overnight bag and went to my mum's house. I offered contact at any time on the condition he came to my mums house or it was in a public place. The father chose not to see the children.

On [REDACTED] the father had the locks changed on our family home and shortly after he went on to attend my GP to obtain information about me, I only found out about this in his affidavit months later. He was not a patient at the clinic.

I arranged for counselling in a desperate attempt to see if he would realise his behaviour was wrong. He could not control his aggression towards me at counselling. Our psychologist suggested a night out for dinner to relax and not talk about anything that may result in an argument.

At dinner he could not help himself, during the dinner his behaviour was erratic, he was like Jekyll and Hyde. He chose not to drive out for dinner and asked that I drive him home, at first I said no but he followed me to the car and tried to take my keys, he then quickly jumped in the car. As we drove to the house he was very emotionless and fidgeting with something beside him. I was petrified and told him I would come home with the children the following day because I thought that might calm him down if he was considering becoming violent towards me. He kept asking me to go in the house and became very edgy when my parking sensor alarm sounded. I said it was late and quickly left. I drove back to my mums and broke down, I realised I was not safe and I would never feel safe near him.

I feared for myself and for the children. He had threatened me many years that if I ever left I would not see the children, I knew now he was capable of making that happen. With the assistance of the [REDACTED] Police I applied for an intervention Order.

The father then sent me a lawyers letter demanding that I return the children to him and stating that he would allow me to have access to the children for 4 nights per fortnight.

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I contacted [REDACTED] Law to represent me, I was not eligible for legal aid due to the equity in the family home that the father remained in. My solicitor advised me from the start not to disclose Family Violence of Sexual Abuse as these are difficult to prove and are usually used against you and the father would most likely end up with more access as a result.

I have an affidavit that has detailed information that I can provide if required. I have kept all emails and text messages that can be provided as evidence and I have extensive diary notes, video recordings and audio recordings.

Intervention Order History

I attended [REDACTED] police station in [REDACTED] where I made a statement and the police assisted in obtaining an Intervention Order for myself and the children. The father took all funds from our accounts and stopped all access to money, including day care fees. The police contacted the father on [REDACTED] and it was arranged to meet at the property the next day. Overnight he sold joint shares depositing all money in his private account and hid my personal property and the children's to prevent me from taking it.

I attended the property with a police officer, he told the officer that I had already taken my belongings. Regardless of the order allowing me to have my personal belongings and jointly owned property I was prevented by the father in doing this.

I have requested many times via my lawyers and the police for items to be returned, the father has only returned what he wants me to have and has withheld other items of significant meaning to me and the children. I still do not have some of my personal items after final orders. My lawyer has advised me that there is not much that can be done to have them returned as he is stating he does not have them or has just refused.

[REDACTED] the [REDACTED] Police took statements for two separate incidents in regards to breaches of the IVO. The first when the father physically restrained [REDACTED] in his car, resulting in an [REDACTED] injury and secondly for physically ripping my mums hand away from [REDACTED] that resulted in a wrist injury to [REDACTED]. These were during changeovers where [REDACTED] refused to go.

It took 6 months before I was told no charges would be laid. I was told that he would probably argue that he had a right to take his children for access and was likely to not be charged. I had supplied medical evidence, a witness and video footage. I was advised to take it up in family court. The police advised me they cannot and will not assist in facilitating the court ordered return of my personal items as part of the IVO. I was advised to take it up with the family court. The father was advised weeks before I was advised that no charges would be laid.

During another access attempt the father physically restrained [REDACTED] kicking, punching and screaming and locked her in the house for ten minutes. I contacted the police and expressed that I was fearful for the safety of my daughter, I waited for around twenty minutes before I received a phone call from the police stating they were not getting involved. I told the police they needed to come and help her, I could hear yelling and screaming from the house. The police did not arrive until forty minutes later when [REDACTED] had disassociated and was defeated. The horrific screams

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of [REDACTED] locked in the house still haunt me, I will never forget the fear in [REDACTED] eyes and the impact it had on myself and the children. The police took no further action.

When returning [REDACTED] home from access one evening the father called the girls to the door, he picked up [REDACTED] and attempted to put her in his car. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were panicked. I told him to put her down at least five times before he listened and left. This left the children being fearful of living at home as he constantly questioned them which rooms they slept in.

Intervention order final hearing: the Magistrate said that he would not hear the case as it was a matter for Family Court and asked that I withdraw, I had no other alternative.

On [REDACTED] I attended the fathers residence as per the courts order to facilitate access. [REDACTED] Police attended the property at the time. They spoke to me for about two minutes and then spoke to the father for about ten minutes. When they came from the house they advised me that this will be reported as a family violence incident on both sides as I had reported assault and the father had reported assault. They reported that they believed [REDACTED] or myself were not in any future danger. I advised them that I did not assault him and I had audio recording of the entire access change over. The police advised me that if I wanted they could arrest the two of us and take us both for questioning. I advised them I would take it up with my local police station. The police then advised that I was contravening current court orders and I was on his property preventing him from facilitating the current orders. I was still in shock by the events and got into my car and left. I have pictures of my [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I initially had a sore arm with no bruising, I left with the girls. I have audio of this incident.

I provided a transcript to my local Police Station in [REDACTED]. I was contacted by [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] and invited to attend the station to make a statement regarding the unlawful assault on myself. The police did not press any charges advising they did not have enough evidence. Again the father knew of this outcome weeks before I was advised.

On [REDACTED] I attended the Magistrates Court in [REDACTED] and applied for a interim Intervention Order. This was granted. The Magistrate stated that she could not guarantee that the children would be safe in the fathers care due to the incident and also ordered a suspension of the Family Court Order for 21 days.

On [REDACTED] I attended the Magistrates Court for a directions hearing regarding the IVO. An extension of the IVO was granted and the Magistrate suspended the Family Court Orders for another 21 days.

The Family Violence worker at the [REDACTED] Magistrates Court spoke to me at length and expressed her concerns. She told me that my case had been marked for attention as it was a very serious case of Family Violence.

On [REDACTED] I attended the [REDACTED] Magistrates Court for the intervention order final hearing. The father was contesting the order. Child protection arrived at the court and recommended that the father and I make an agreement as they would be making a recommendation to the court. My barrister advised me to accept this agreement as the Magistrate would most likely follow the recommendations of child protection.

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The recommendation was:

- The children be removed from the IVO
- The IVO remain in place for 12 months
- Access to be supervised by child protection for either one hour or two as advised by child protection
- Child protection to notify the mother of when, where and how long access is to take place, and;
- Child protection to collect and return the children for the purpose of access.

The father and I agreed to the recommendations of Child Protection and the IVO listing myself only as a protected person was granted. I felt that I had no other option but to accept due to Child Protections involvement. I also very intimidated on that day as the father was at the court with many members of his family and I was there with just myself and my sister.

Family Court Proceedings

I made the decision to change all children's schooling and day care as I was now 30 minutes from the school and ██████ had been experiencing social issues for a number of weeks prior to separation. I had taken leave from work and the extra travel was having a financial impact.

I informed the father of the change to a closer school and moved ██████, the father did not agree. ██████ was in a class with her cousin her confidence was given a major boost by going up ██████ levels in words and readers. She was really happy and settled.

I found a townhouse to rent and with the support of my family set up a home for me and the children. My family helped me with beds and I borrowed money from my mum for other household items. ██████ and ██████ loved their new home but couldn't understand why they were not allowed their own belongings.

I received a court hearing notice as matter of urgency regarding schooling. There was no mediation. The father only had issues with ██████ attending ██████ primary but did not raise concerns that I had enrolled ██████ at a local preschool closer to our new home. ██████ also attended a day care closer to our new home.

██████ had repeatedly asked her dad if she could go to ██████, he always replied it wasn't his choice and would then yell at her to stop asking and he didn't want to hear about it again. He then later stated that they could not attend ██████ because he couldn't pick them up as they would be living with him and it was too far away.

Child protection contacted the court on the ██████ with concerns regarding the children's safety. The court did not change any orders when receiving this advice. The Independent Children's Lawyer requested a hearing for leave to issue ██████ subpoenas. A hearing was set for ██████.

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Attendances at Court

COURT - [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

Abridgement Hearing for schooling

Court ordered: Section 11F child inclusive conference. Adjourned [REDACTED]

COURT - [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

Report by [REDACTED] stated that the father was not child focused, and if my residence is an unreasonable distance from [REDACTED] previous school then [REDACTED] should keep her current enrolment (being [REDACTED]) there was information supporting allegations that the father had exposed the children to verbal violence and placed undue pressure upon the child to influence views regarding parenting arrangements which has contributed to [REDACTED]'s reluctance to spend time with him.

Court ordered: Family Report, [REDACTED] to return to her previous school and

ACCESS - [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. Telephone every [REDACTED]. Parties restrained from conflicting corporal punishment, discussing court proceedings or questioning children with respect to future residential arrangements. Parties to enrol and complete post parenting separation course.

COURT - [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

Court ordered: Online parenting course, round table family therapy with the childrens psychologist and to follow the recommendations of [REDACTED]. Arrange and attend intake appointment for family dispute resolution. Attend conciliation conference on [REDACTED]

ACCESS- Step ladder approach to access then every [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], changing in [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Notes: Judge would not overturn schooling as he did not have relevant documents before him.

Final hearing set [REDACTED] for three days.

COURT - [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

Ordered: Schooling interim hearing for [REDACTED] and Child Protection to provide a 69ZW report.

COURT - [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

Ordered: ICL to be appointed and the issue of schooling adjourned to final hearing

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Note: DHS report and a family report submitted on the day. This hearing was a hearing regarding schooling only however the fathers barrister made it about the reports and labelling me a bad mother stating that I had influenced the children in child sexual abuse allegations. Also stating that I am over servicing the children and that the children should be removed from me.

COURT - [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

Ordered: Supervised access.

Note: Child Protection were at court and stood up in court and recommended supervised access as the children had made a clear disclosure of sexual abuse.

COURT - [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

The Independent Children's Lawyer barrister spoke to me and expressed that access should be changed to weekly "supervised" with a person the father feels comfortable with, not the children. That a psychiatric assessment was not needed as sexual harm had not been "substantiated", that the children should not attend CASA as this "muddies the water" as they may start believing they had been abused and the children be enrolled immediately at [REDACTED] primary. It was also recommended that the whole family attend another family report even though this was against the recommendation of the family report [REDACTED] at the court. The ICL advised me that the DHS agreed with these recommendations. I felt that I had no alternative but to agree with the recommendation of the ICL as during the negotiations the fathers legal team made me out to be uncooperative. I found the whole process overwhelming and found it difficult to speak up with at least three male barristers telling me how things should be.

Ordered: Supervised access each [REDACTED] [REDACTED] to return back to [REDACTED] Primary school and the parties to attend a family report with psychologist [REDACTED]. The children are NOT to attend any CASA agency for therapy.

COURT - [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

Ordered: Matter adjourned until [REDACTED].

COURT - [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

Ordered: Matter transferred to the Family Court. Both parties to attend a psychiatrist selected by the ICL. Both parties and the children to attend family therapy with a suitably qualified professional as selected by the ICL. Access changeovers to take place at an access centre.

Note: [REDACTED] stated that I lodged an application to suspend time with between the children and their father. This is incorrect. My application was for the time with the father to be supervised by a access centre by a professional.

COURT - [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

COURT - [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

COURT - [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

Directions hearing

COURT - [REDACTED] - [REDACTED]

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Orders by consent. Children live with the mother [REDACTED] nights per fortnight and [REDACTED]. Children live with the father [REDACTED] nights per fortnight and [REDACTED].

Note: I was forced to sign these consent orders with a further notation stating I did not believe the children were at risk of sexual abuse in the fathers care. I was threatened with having the children removed from my care with the possibility of limited and possibly supervised contact. I was not permitted to negotiate any terms.

The Independent Children Lawyer

The ICL [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] Lawyers was appointed in [REDACTED].

The ICL requested that the children attend family therapy with [REDACTED] regardless of a previous order to attend family therapy with Dr [REDACTED] who already has a relationship with the children. This subjected the children to another person being involved.

The ICL requested that the children attend another family report with [REDACTED] regardless of the advice of the previous report writer Dr [REDACTED] recommending against this. I believe that if another family report was necessary then the same report writer should have been utilised instead of subjecting the children to another person. I believe that considering the sexual abuse disclosures that a female would have been more suitable. The father paid for two reports with [REDACTED].

The ICL requested that the parents attend a psychiatric assessment with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] regardless of a previous agreement between the parents to attend Dr [REDACTED]. I had attended an assessment with Dr [REDACTED] and was not diagnosed with a mental illness. I could not afford the \$3000.00 fee and therefore the father paid for this assessment.

The case summary document lodged to the Family Court by the ICL had my name incorrect and said the children were not Aboriginal. He also stated that the historical allegations of abuse falls well below the threshold required for the Court to consider the Children are at risk. He also wrote that I had stated that I no longer believed the children were at risk of sexual abuse so this was not to be considered.

The ICL did not speak directly to the children. The ICL did not consult with the professionals involved with the children including obtaining affidavits an opinion regarding the children. The ICL rarely responded to any letters sent by my Lawyer.

Child Protection Involvement

I have kept a diary of contact between child protection and myself. I have also recorded most conversations so I am able to clearly recall conversations and information provided to me.

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I have been advised that when a complaint is made that the worker is not informed of the details of the complaint. This has not been the case. The workers have known about each complaint and have mentioned this in conversation. It is my belief that this has had an impact on the investigation and has had a direct influence on the outcome of family court proceedings.

On several occasions when I have expressed concerns regarding the involvement of [REDACTED] I have been referred directly back to her or she has contacted me and asked me directly why I was wanting to speak to her supervisor.

I have received letters advising me that her supervisor would contact me, however I have never received any contact and instead [REDACTED] herself would call.

I am concerned that child protection have discussed the sexual abuse allegations with members of the community for the purpose of supervising access between the father and the children. I was not consulted before this occurred and did not consent to this. I am concerned that this is a breach of privacy and confidentiality that may impact my children in the future. To my knowledge the "supervisors" did not sign a confidentiality form. I lodged a complaint regarding this and received a letter stating I would be contacted, this did not occur. [REDACTED] however at various stages stated to me that Child Protection could speak to whoever they wanted to.

I have been advised by the professionals involved with the children that when they have been contacted by child protection that the questioning has been very concerning as it appears to be more focussed on me as the childrens mother than the childrens welfare.

Child protection have not included speaking to all significant family involved with the children, they interviewed many members of the fathers family and friends but did not provide the same procedures to my family and friends. I asked every worker involved in my case to contact the [REDACTED] as part of the information gathering process. I was referred many times by the [REDACTED] to seek Domestic Violence resources. To my knowledge Child Protection have not contacted this service.

Child Protection were subpoenaed to provide all documents to the Family Court. I viewed these documents and there were documents that were not provided. The documents provided were all of the father and his family and friends. The interviews with one of the supervisors and some of my family members were not among these documents. I asked Child Protection numerous times about this and have never received an answer. I believe the one sided material would have a direct influence on any person reading the subpoenaed material.

I contacted child protection in [REDACTED] and discussed at length my concerns in regards to Family Violence and how this may affect the children after separation. I was advised by the worker to think about if I want child protection involved as this should be a last resort option. The worker indicated that this would be a bad option as a report may go against protecting my children. I did not leave my name or the names of my children.

In [REDACTED] I spoke to child protection after [REDACTED] had told her Nan that her dad had put a finger in her bum where the poo came out. I was told that it was a difference in parenting and that [REDACTED] had confused a smack with a finger in the anus. I was also

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told I don't need to report everything and was advised to be careful going down that track.

In November [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] both disclosed in detail an incident where their father sexually assaulted them. The children spoke to their GP and their Psychologist briefly about this incident and it was reported to child protection. I did not receive any calls from child protection and only became aware of their involvement when the [REDACTED] SOCIT unit contacted me and asked me to attend an interview with the children. I was told not to discuss with the children as to why they were attending a police station. The children spoke about the incident but did not directly disclose the act. Child protection were present at the interview.

I attended an interview alone with child protection, it seemed to be more focused on the fathers viewpoint and his interview that was earlier than mine. They suggested that I had been abused as a child and that I was projecting this on to the children. This was a comment made by the father that has no basis. The father was allowed to show video/pictures of the children happy at access. I offered footage of the children attempting access and after access, this was refused.

As I am of aboriginal heritage, I believed [REDACTED] were to be notified and present at all interviews, they were not notified at all times and therefore did not attend any of the interviews with my children or myself regardless of requests to do so.

Child Protection provided a report to the Federal Circuit Court dated [REDACTED], this report contained here say evidence from a third party that had an impact on proceedings. The report is biased in some areas regarding wording and content. I asked that child protection amend this report to remain neutral and report only on fact, this has been refused and told if I have an issue to subpoena the writer.

I had numerous conversations with [REDACTED] regarding child protection involvement and the report provided to the Federal Circuit Court. I spoke to her about the information provided in court. [REDACTED] kept asking me if I believed that the information was biased and if it was place a complaint about it. After these many discussions I eventually told her that the way the report was written was biased. The case worker was removed and [REDACTED] advised that she would manage the case.

In [REDACTED], I was told the case was getting closed, my mother called to express her concern that she had not been interviewed regarding the disclosures as my Mum was the first person [REDACTED] disclosed to.

In [REDACTED] the court order of access changed to the father being able to pick [REDACTED] up from school and have all children from [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] had a breakdown on her first day of school as she was terrified her dad would be picking her up. I took [REDACTED] home and called child protection, they asked me to attend the office with the children.

I was told there were no protective concerns as the children had not disclosed sexual abuse directly to them. I questioned why the children disclosing the abuse to their Psychologist Dr [REDACTED], their GP and Dr [REDACTED] was not enough to raise concern regarding their safety in his care. It was reiterated to me the children had not disclosed directly to child protection. I was then told by child protection to not allow [REDACTED] any contact with her previous school [REDACTED] primary, and that it is not against the law to hit a child that it is just a difference in parenting.

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I asked child protection as to why the two people that the children disclosed to had not interviewed, however it appeared almost all members of the fathers family and his extended family had been interviewed at some stage. After this my mum and sister were interviewed on the [REDACTED].

On [REDACTED] I sent a letter to the Department of Human Services. I have not received a reply to this letter. The letter outlined the concerns I had spoken to the case workers about.

On [REDACTED] I met with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. My sister attended this meeting and we both left the meeting very concerned as I was threatened with having my children removed.

On [REDACTED] my local Member of Parliament [REDACTED] arranged for a meeting with Child Protection. I attended this meeting at [REDACTED]'s office with his assistant [REDACTED] and child protections operations manager [REDACTED] and the assistant director [REDACTED]. During this meeting not many answers were given and a lot of concerns regarding the involvement of Child Protection was raised. The workers were going to follow up on this. I have extensive notes and emails regarding this.

On [REDACTED] I contacted the child protection after hours line to advise of an incident where the father assaulted me and forcefully removed [REDACTED] from me locking her in the house.

On [REDACTED] I received a letter from child protection advising that they will no longer be involved with the family. The letter was dated the [REDACTED].

On [REDACTED] the children's GP advised that the injury [REDACTED] had sustained during the incident on the [REDACTED] had been reported to child protection. I was advised that child protection advised the GP that the case was closed and would not be reopened.

On [REDACTED] child protection lodged a report to the Federal Circuit Court.

On [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] attended my home to discuss the outcome of the child protection investigation. During this meeting the workers told me that I had come from an abusive background and this has influenced my parenting. I was not abused as a child and I do not consider myself coming from an abusive home. Three of my [REDACTED] siblings were abused however this was not disclosed until they were adults and this should not be a consideration in my situation.

I asked child protection as to why they have not investigated family violence. The response I received was "you did not complain about this during the relationship so you have no right to complain about it now".

Throughout the involvement of child protection I have been told by a team leader that the department would:

- interview with more direct questions to investigate the likeliness of sexual abuse
- Interview the person/s that the children disclosed to

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- Liaise with professionals that are involved in the children's care
- Affidavits supplied for court would be utilised as part of the investigation.

Professionals are now unable to contact child protection with their ongoing concerns due to the view that the workers have taken. This has left my children at risk and vulnerable.

I believe that Child Protection have formed an opinion that the children have been influenced regardless of the children being consistent with the same details over a long period of time. I believe this opinion has been reached due to my child being asked to read her own writing and not being able to. The workers did not consider that my daughter had learnt to sound but had yet not learnt to read.

Involvement of Professionals

Dr [REDACTED] – Family Court Psychologist

It was noted that the father was very egocentric and not child focused it was deemed inappropriate for observations to be made with the father on that date due to detailed sexual abuse disclosures made during the interview with the children. It was noted that the father could not see things from a child's perspective.

Dr [REDACTED] - Child Psychologist

The children were patients of Dr [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was referred by GP as she had suffered a panic episode while getting a non-invasive medical examination by a male doctor. [REDACTED] was later referred for behaviour and anxiety. Both children disclosed physical abuse during the relationship that I was unaware of. They discussed that they had witnessed arguments between the father and myself. [REDACTED] later disclosed sexual abuse from her father while I was at work during the relationship. [REDACTED] has also disclosed sexual abuse committed by the father on several occasions. I have attended some of these appointments to discuss ways to help the children cope with anxiety.

The father and I attended a family therapy session as part of a consent order, this started off fine and quickly turned to him verbally attacking and putting me down. He could not control his anger or emotions towards me. He refused to continue with family therapy.

Psychiatrist Dr [REDACTED]

The children were referred by their GP as she was concerned with how they were coping as she had witnessed a complete breakdown of the children. The psychiatrist recommended that the children not attend access and that they should be asked to attend and only attend if they agree. He stated that forcing them to attend in a distressed state would be detrimental causing psychological damage.

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The father and I agreed in a family therapy session with Dr [REDACTED] to attend Dr [REDACTED] for the purpose of a psychiatric assessment. I attended, the father did not instead stating that we did not make this agreement.

Family dispute resolution

I attended to assess the suitability for mediation I was advised that we were unsuitable in these circumstances. She believed access should be supervised but the father was unwilling to accept this and therefore mediation was deemed to be more detrimental to the existing situation. The mediator understood exactly what I was experiencing and the affects this was having on the children and myself. This court ordered mediation however was confidential and no one was informed about the outcome of this intervention.

Psychologist – [REDACTED]

The ICL and the father requested the involvement of psychologist [REDACTED] [REDACTED] ignored the children's direct wishes and instead formed his opinion based on the report from Child Protection. It is my belief that Child Protection directly asked that this report be provided immediately to [REDACTED] on the day it was submitted.

Family Therapy – [REDACTED]

Initial appointment was on the [REDACTED] with myself and the father. [REDACTED] spoke to the father for about 45 minutes and then me for around 30 minutes. We then had a group consultation for the remainder of the 2 hour session.

During the group therapy [REDACTED] advised us of her rules " I will tell you what you should do, if you don't I will not help you and advise the court of this".

[REDACTED] said to me that there are alternative explanations for children's disclosures in high conflict cases in her opinion. She continued with I am not saying something's did or didn't happen, you haven't considered the alternative and that's not good enough.

[REDACTED] then said to both of us. Address the high conflict, address how the kids respond. Look at how the children present and develop as a result of high conflict and deal with that. If I still have concerns then I will start pathologising your children.

[REDACTED] then started a conversation about sexual abuse. Her exact words were "so what if what you say is true, what does it mean? What if it's not true? What if it is true? Let's talk about it.

I replied that there would be no trust that the children would be safe.

[REDACTED] said "I don't know about that, if you think that is the only thing that is causing the children to be psychologically threatened, it's not. If all they see is two parents that

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are high conflict, we know from research. I can see that you failed to protect your children. That is more serious than a finger up the bum. It's proven research".

■■■■ also said "there is not a court, an order or a professional that will rescue your children. I predict your children to be the most damaged".

The second appointment on the ■■■■ for the children only. ■■■■ remarked at how well the children presented and praised my parenting. We spoke about the children having supervised access with child protection on that day. ■■■■ advised me that she believed this to be not in the children's best interests and would be contacting child protection to ask that they withhold their supervision until ■■■■ had observed on one occasion.

The next appointment was for one hour with the children and their father. I dropped the children off and returned an hour later. At the door ■■■■ said that she had no concerns what so ever about the children in their fathers care, the children have had fun and although at first the girls were reserved they then interacted reasonably well. ■■■■ told me that if the children told me after access they were not happy I was to shut them down and tell them I saw them having fun and not to continue the conversation. She said that the next appointments would be with the father and the children and they may go swimming or shopping etc.

She told me that I have to go out to the yard where the children and their father were and say to the children "I can see how much fun you are having" and to say hello to their father. I did what I was asked, the father did not reply to my face but turned his back to reply. ■■■■ hopped from the trampoline and said "Daddy's house", ■■■■ commented that all he wants to do is go to his Dads house. ■■■■ said this as this is ■■■■ expectation as this is what has occurred in the previous access arrangements.

I stood next to the swing with ■■■■ and ■■■■ and observed. ■■■■ was trying to get down from the trampoline, her father was asking for a hug. ■■■■ kept saying no, ■■■■ also attempted to coerce ■■■■ into hugging her father. ■■■■ continued to say no. ■■■■ then got down from the trampoline and picked up her shoes, ■■■■ then told ■■■■ that her father can put them on her. ■■■■ continued to say no. ■■■■ then picked up ■■■■ and put her on the trampoline where she was forced to allow her father to put her shoes on.

I went inside the house to get ■■■■ bag. On return I found ■■■■ face down on the tire swing, her father watching. The rope from the swing was that far up her bottom it was visibly disturbing. I told ■■■■ not to sit like that on the swing, it must hurt and hop off immediately. ■■■■ could not because she was stuck. The father did not attempt to stop this from happening. I took ■■■■ off the swing asked her to put her shoes on immediately as we were going.

The following appointment (supervised access) was on the ■■■■. I dropped off the children and returned one hour later, there was no conversation about how the appointment went. The children hopped in the car and were visibly drained. ■■■■ told me that ■■■■ had attended the appointment and that her father had said that he did so because it's been a while since you have seen your sister.

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Family therapy is court ordered with the parents and the children of our relationship only. It was completely unprofessional to allow another family member present and for this to be accepted and allowed as part of family therapy.

The appointments with father and children are supervised by [REDACTED]. I have asked what her qualifications are and have not received a reply. The family therapist was only present at one full appointment. It was later confirmed that the appointments were not being utilised as family therapy, these were supervised contact sessions. I was made to pay for these sessions as family therapy. This left me in financial hardship and I had to request a payment plan. This was refused by [REDACTED] and therefore access ceased. The father was given the option to pay the full amount to continue seeing the children, he did not take up this offer and instead chose not to see the children.

The final court order requires both parents to continue with sending the children to see [REDACTED] on her request and costs be split. Her fees are excessive at \$300.00 per session. She would not take into consideration the intervention order and only received feedback from the father when speaking to the children. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] has since refused any further sessions as my lawyer has asked in writing for her to consider these things.

Psychiatrist – [REDACTED]

The father paid for the report and assessment by this psychiatrist. The report was an affidavit of events rather than a psychiatric assessment. The report reflects the opinion of the father. The report states that I am a co-dependant mother. There is no basis to this. I have had a forensic psychological assessment, a previous psychiatric assessment and regularly see a psychologist. None of these professionals have formed this opinion. I have spoken to the childrens psychologist [REDACTED], she has told me that in her opinion I am not a co-dependant mother. I have attached a copy of [REDACTED] report.

Impact

The father has continued his abusive and manipulative behaviour since separation with the children by:

- Discussed court outcomes
- Told the children they will live with him and he will take them away
- Isolated [REDACTED] from the other children during access

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- Neglected their medical needs by failing to follow doctors orders and administer the prescribed asthma medication.
- Hit and yelled at the children
- Physically restrained and locked [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] in the house
- Acted aggressively to cause fear
- Denigrated me and role played with the children depicting me as a monster
- Injured [REDACTED]'s ankle and wrist and thumb.
- Called relatives names this upsets the children
- Manipulated the children by giving them prepared statements such as "tell the people you love mum and dad the same, equally"
- Tells them to stop lying

I am not sure what it is going to take for children's voices to be heard in the legal system and child protection. There needs to be a change, it is easier to build a child than to repair an adult. Children should have the right to a loving relationship without fear, without abuse and without psychological damage. Children have the right to be heard and be involved in decisions that affect them.

I was told to not go down the path of domestic violence and sexual abuse as I would probably lose my children.

I have listened to and acted on recommendations by professionals that are involved with my children, my heart was ripped out when I heard the disclosures and then again in court being told by Judge [REDACTED] "what kind of mother would do this to the children, what have they done to deserve this".

I cannot explain the torment of these words, I have done everything asked of me and all I am standing up for is the right for my children to feel safe and protected. It appears the family violence and the way the father acts has been ignored.

I am the mother protecting and putting my young children's needs first, I am the mother consoling our children after their father has said or acted in appropriately. I

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am a mother that needs help, I need someone to stand up and speak for my children. Our children have a right to live without fear.

Events since Final Orders

The children have continued with therapy with their psychologist [REDACTED]. All professionals involved in regular care of the children have serious concerns regarding the children's safety and wellbeing. None of the professionals will contact child protection with their concerns as their previous contact has been very scathing of me and the professionals are concerned that because child protection are not taking any of these notifications seriously then the children will be further put at risk.

The father has ceased paying Child Support and has resigned from his executive position in a well paid job due to his mental state. I received a doctor's report from his doctor and from Child Support agency confirming that the father is suffering from a mental illness that is affecting his ability to cope. This was not disclosed to any of the professionals throughout the proceedings and should have been considered. I am now in the process of lodging another application to the court to have this considered.

I have sought assistance with this matter through various ministers. None of which have been at all helpful. I believe that Child Protection are able to have influence and provide their version of events that are believed, no questions asked. I have been asked to provide a formal complaint to the Victorian Ombudsman Office as they have already expressed concerns regarding the involvement of Child Protection.

Please note this is not a complete history as I have not had enough time to compile everything. If you require further information please feel free to contact at anytime.