

Submission to the Royal Commission into Domestic Violence

I wish to remain anonymous if this to be published on the website [REDACTED] but I will supply my name to the commission. [REDACTED] I have 3 degrees, therefore well educated but still fell into the DV trap. I can only comment on DV.

I am a survivor of DV and was married to my perpetrator for [REDACTED] years. He was a police officer initially and then had his own business (farm) where for 16 years I worked also. Being very young when I married and very vulnerable, I did not understand coercive control, but recognised some red flags but not all. The red flags occurred 3 weeks after marriage, they were very violent behaviour towards me and drinking excess alcohol producing that violence. I left at the end of the first year but went back as he promised to stop which did not happen. I had rented a unit and he turned up in his police uniform and took me forcibly to the office of the rental company and stated to the woman it was a mistake and the rented property should be rescinded, which she did. The red flags I did not see was the isolation and control that began early and were later recognised when I was in my 40's. My ex lost me my job by ringing my workplace daily about 10-15 times asking what I was doing and where I was, usually asking my staff, I was manager at the time. I was then in the [REDACTED] business and under control with no money and no way of getting out.

In [REDACTED] I left home and went to Centrelink and asked for help and because we were on a [REDACTED] I was told "you have an asset that is worth money so you don't qualify for help" "you need to sell that first". How the hell could I do that. So I had to go back and suffer more violence. It took me another 10 years to get out. I was physically, financially and emotionally abused in all those years. I had to get myself out by finally getting a job and securing my freedom. I finally left for good in 2010 a very dangerous time.

1. What causes domestic, family and sexual violence?

The causes are complex but I think they are learned behaviour and from my experience his father had violent tendencies a fact that I only found out in my 40's. I think that men's roles have changed since women entered the workforce and they feel usurped in their role as the breadwinner. I got comments like "you have the pieces of paper you go get a job". I think that they exert force to maintain control as they are the ones that lack confidence and replace that with bad behaviour, Toxic masculinity.

In my case I also think the police training helped by expressing the idea back then in the 70's that they had all the power to do what they liked to people in upholding the law. He used the choking holds on me as an example and would comment on going to 101's (dv) situations and always saying it was the female's fault. Now as a teacher I can see that in schools and clubs (football, soccer) atmosphere they also promote the behaviour that the male is the best and is superior, with the boy's club mentality. I found that in the end it was me that had control and that most perpetrator's lack self-esteem and are insecure.

2. What works, or will work, to prevent domestic, family and sexual violence?

Education from a very young age, primary school, change the mentality in the sporting clubs, they are the worst especially if they are male dominated. Change the boys club culture in workplaces and educate the police on DV. It needs to be part of the curriculum the words mindset etc can only be changed in the young.

Identify, maintain a register and broadcast those that have perpetrated DV and Sexual violence. Definitely need more money given to the centres that help women from DV and better powers to police on coercive control. Centrelink needs to recognise DV and give payments to help financially strapped women to escape.

3. What existing initiatives are directed at addressing the attitudes and systems that drive domestic, family and sexual violence? Are they effective? In schools I have not seen any education on DV. I have been part of consent and sexual violence education in schools and that is working, especially the consent. BUT I came across an incident in my school this year where boys on insta or snapchat playing the "rape or nah game". Nothing was reported to the police no phones were taken and no car report. Senior management wanted to keep it in house to avoid giving the school a bad name. Independent school, I was appalled.

4. What systems, including systems outside of government, receive information which may allow for the identification of individuals who are at high risk of experiencing or perpetrating domestic, family and sexual violence? Police, Centrelink, DCP, counselling services, crisis centres., school, Carl report.

5. What is needed to allow for this information to be used by government and specialist domestic, family and sexual violence services? Cross collaboration between states and areas that gain information on DV. Centrelink, dv crisis centres, psychologists, DCP, police and government need to be aware of all cases. There are too many internet sites that give different information it needs to come from 1 or 2 sources only.

6. What interventions should be considered to manage the risk of a person who is identified as being at high risk of experiencing or perpetrating domestic, family and sexual violence?

People should learn to talk to others about DV and sexual violence, I regularly went to work with choke marks around my neck and no one said anything to me. It should not be a taboo subject. The violent person should be removed from the home.

7. What are the barriers to reporting domestic, family and sexual violence to police or seeking support from domestic, family and sexual violence services?

If he is in the police force you can report like I could not, you are told it is your fault, you are scared of retribution, you are monitored hourly especially in a [REDACTED] situation. You will not be believed as some cry wolf. You have no MARKS to show as some are very good at hitting in places where bruises do not occur, so police don't believe. In my case he was part of the police system and even when he was not, he was mandatory reported and when the police turned up about his firearms he twisted the whole story. The brotherhood.

8. What are the elements of a best practice crisis response which will meet the needs of:

a. a victim-survivor? Money to get out, housing for those that have no money, crisis centres fully funded. Counselling that is free, I had to pay for my own.

b. a victim-survivor who is a child? counselling

c. a perpetrator (acknowledging that one need is to hold a perpetrator to account for their use of violence)? Counselling and community service, identified on a register.

9. What are the elements of a best practice health response?

10. What are the elements of a best practice police response? Be educated on DV and coercive control, a special unit for it with female and male police. Look internally at their own. On my forums I have found that many police have perpetrated DV. A closed system that only certain police can view.

11. What are the elements of a best practice justice system response? More appropriate jail terms for Murder with DV. Do not allow provocation as a defence or alcohol.

12. Taking into account your response(s) to questions 8 to 11, which elements are already in place in the domestic, family and sexual violence systems in South Australia?

13. Acknowledging that every victim-survivor will have different needs depending on their personal circumstances, are there universal needs that will arise for all victim-survivors?

Counselling, help groups (I could not find one), housing, money.

14. What are the best practice approaches to supporting a victim-survivor to recover from trauma and the mental, physical, emotional and economic impacts of violence? Some banks are now on board with accounts for DV, all need to do this. Workplaces need to recognise this and actually talk about it.

Trauma informed psychologist most are cognitive and that does not cut it.

15. Taking into account your response to question 14, what best practice approaches are already in place in the domestic, family and sexual violence systems in South Australia? No idea anymore.