

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Our daughter, [REDACTED] passed away on the evening of [REDACTED]

It is the family's belief that she was subject to coercive control, and that this contributed to her death.

There are aspects of the process that followed her death that we find troubling, and we request that the Royal Commission give consideration to recommending changes to those processes in order to prevent others being subjected to the same torment.

### **[REDACTED] Circumstances**

[REDACTED] married in [REDACTED] was living with her husband [REDACTED], at the time of her death.

We live at [REDACTED] directly over the road; we saw her on an almost daily basis.

During the course of her marriage, we became aware of difficulties she was having to deal with. These included;

- Verbal abuse (we frequently witnessed [REDACTED] husband screaming at her and displaying his temper by such acts as throwing food she had prepared onto the front lawn if it didn't meet his demands).
- Probable physical abuse (although we never witnessed this abuse, she exhibited frequent bruising which she would never explain).
- Financial abuse (all debts were in her name, including approximately \$80,000 in credit card debt. They maintained separate bank accounts, his salary (\$100,000+ per annum) went into his account. All outgoings, rent, car payments, credit cards, groceries, and utility bills were paid by her out of her account. He would give her a small allowance; however, she frequently had her debit card declined because of insufficient funds, and she would have to go to him cap-in-hand to get more money).
- Isolation from friends. (Her friends were discouraged from visiting, and should she go to a friend's place, he would constantly text or phone her requesting she tell him when she would be home).

- Denial of intimacy ( [REDACTED] revealed to her mother that although she yearned to become a mother, intimacy was almost non-existent. She had body image issues and went through gastric banding surgery, but when she lost [REDACTED] he became alarmed, and sought to “fatten her up” again because she had become attractive, which he saw as a threat. He finally agreed to participate in an IVF programme, however he stalled that decision until [REDACTED] was biologically beyond childbearing age. Both IVF attempts failed).

[REDACTED] would avoid discussing most of these issues when raised by her mother. Her reasons were that should her husband find out that she had been talking about these issues, he would lose his temper, and that she would be in even more trouble.

Over time, [REDACTED] began to drink in order to escape her reality. Her drinking became problematic; her employer found out that she had been drinking at work, and after her passing, when the family was retrieving her possessions, more than 100 empty wine bottles were found hidden about her house.

Six months before she died, she crashed her car when drunk, lost her licence, and her insurance was voided because of her positive breath analysis result.

She had sunk to the depths of despair, because she was now dependant on him to take her wherever she needed to go.

## **[REDACTED] Death**

On the afternoon of [REDACTED], [REDACTED] visited our house. She appeared unhappy, but physically she seemed well.

A little after [REDACTED] we received a hysterical phone call from her husband to say the [REDACTED] had collapsed. On exiting our house, we saw two ambulances and a MICA vehicle outside her house.

Despite the fact that we lived [REDACTED] from [REDACTED] mother, who lives [REDACTED] away was already in attendance.

We now understand that by the time we were called, the ambulance had been in attendance for some 20 minutes.

We entered the house to find [REDACTED] lying on the lounge room floor with 5 ambulance medics frantically trying to revive her. Over the next two hours, she was briefly revived four times, however as soon as the medics stopped the defibrillator, her breathing would cease, and at approximately [REDACTED] she was pronounced dead.

Her husband was in a state of high distress; however, his first concern was gaining access to her phone, and he asked my wife and I if we knew the password.

This was incredibly strange behaviour.

### **SAPOL Actions**

Three uniformed police officers attended the scene that evening. They were empathetic in their attitude, and we hold them in high praise, however although they were approached by family and friends who wished to make statements, none were taken.

It is the family's belief, and the belief of friends who have been serving police officers, that the uniformed officers were remiss in not seeking the attendance of CIB who are much better placed to be able to offer an opinion as to whether or not further investigation of the sudden death of an otherwise healthy [REDACTED] female should be undertaken.

The family contends, that the scene should have been attended by CIB, declared a sterile area, and her electronic devices should have been seized and taken for forensic examination.

We believe (and still do) that her phone in particular, contains information that would have assisted in understanding [REDACTED]'s circumstances.

None of this was done.

It took several months of the family's lobbying SAPOL for CIB to finally visit her husband and seize the phone. Since that time, SAPOL contend that they are unable to break the access code, and thus any possible evidence remains out of reach.

I have spoken to cyber experts, who advise me that this claim is rubbish, and that all phones, laptops and computers can be opened, even if they are of propriety electronic architecture as [REDACTED]'s phone was.

The family sought access to copies of the Police Report and any statements taken, however this request was formally declined by SAPOL who gave the following reasons;

*"A document is an exempt document if it contains matter for the purposes of proceedings (including any transcript of proceedings) that are heard or are to be heard before a court or tribunal."*

As there are no court proceeding recommended, we would like to again request access to these statements, however we are advised that although we are [REDACTED]'s parents, we are not classified as either executors of her estate, or next of kin, and thus will be denied again should we reapply for their release.

At the time of writing, we have not been requested by SAPOL to provide any information that may be pertinent to learning more about [REDACTED] death.

### **Considerations**

Because of her fear of her husband, [REDACTED] was frightened of seeking the involvement of SAPOL, or any other organisation that may have been able to offer her assistance in dealing with his controlling behaviour, and thus she was not on anyone's radar.

On two occasions, a friend of [REDACTED] attempted to report his concerns for her safety and wellbeing to officers at the [REDACTED].

On both occasions however, he was told that only the person of concern ([REDACTED]) could lodge a complaint, and thus they would not accept the complaint of a concerned third party.

This is an appalling situation, and suggests that SAPOL officers lack training and/or interest in dealing with issues where a person's welfare is at stake.

The family would like to see significant changes in SAPOL's approach to dealing with such issues.

There are discreet ways of approaching a person of concern, however if the will to proceed is not there, problems that those of concern (mainly women) face will continue to be brushed under the carpet.

Two of [REDACTED]'s friends (one of whom is a SAPOL employee) made statements to SAPOL expressing their knowledge of her situation, however, as far as we understand, their concerns, as expressed in their statements, have never been acted upon.

The family believes that all front-line officers such as those who attended on the night of [REDACTED]'s passing, need better training in quickly recognising the need to involve a higher authority where physical or mental abuse, or in extreme cases death, has occurred.

We recognise that legislation to criminalise coercive control will soon go before parliament, however for it to be effective, a massive change in the culture of SAPOL needs to be take place.

██████████ want to see recommendations for actions that will minimise the possibility of another family having to endure what we have experienced.

We look forward, in due course, to learning of the Royal Commission's findings and recommendations.

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August 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024