OUR JOURNAL

A COLLECTION OF PERSONAL THOUGHTS
ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
The quotes in this document were taken from responses provided to the Taskforce and matters raised at the Taskforce Summits. The Taskforce has made every effort to accurately represent the range of views and experiences in the stories it received, but does not necessarily agree with or endorse these views.

All names or other details that could identify a person, such as ages or occupations, have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Some criticism is levelled about the responses of police, courts, and other government agencies. We have not put these criticisms to the agencies so they have not as yet had the opportunity to respond.

Warning: some of the quotes depict graphic violence and distressing situations and may disturb some readers.
This document has been produced by the Premier’s Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence, and shares the stories of the different ways people have been affected by this violence.
The protea is symbolic of diversity and courage. It stands for change and transformation, and signifies daring and resourcefulness.

It is these qualities which make survivors of domestic and family violence so remarkable.

Domestic violence can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender or wealth. People from diverse communities and backgrounds have shown a great deal of courage by telling their story in their own words.

These stories teach us that moving on from domestic and family violence takes great daring and resourcefulness. The people who have revealed their stories have shown us that they will not be defined by their experiences of violence. More importantly, they demonstrate that change is possible.

The protea has been chosen as the emblem of the Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence. Perhaps most importantly, it symbolises transformation. Step by step, everyone can make a difference to transform society’s attitudes and work towards making domestic and family violence a thing of the past.

cour·age

noun: strength in the face of pain or grief.
7 / WILL ANYONE BELIEVE ME?
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41 / I CAN BE FREE OF THIS
My friends,

When the Premier asked me to Chair the Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence in Queensland, I had no hesitation in saying ‘yes’. I do not underestimate the challenge and responsibility that the Taskforce has in addressing this insidious and pervasive scourge on our community.

Throughout my public life, in former roles and positions, domestic and family violence issues have never been far from the surface. The advancement of human rights and equality cannot happen without freedom from violence against men and women. Campaigns at the highest levels have brought about recognition of, and reforms to, gender equality and non-discrimination. Governments are able to take responsibility and make commitments to reducing violence in all its forms, yet it continues to persist in our communities at increasing rates. It is everywhere. It can affect anyone, regardless of age, how much you earn, whether you are a man or a woman, whatever your cultural background or sexual orientation.

As Queenslanders, we should be alarmed by reports of the increase in domestic and family violence across our State. But we are becoming all too accustomed to hearing the shocking statistics that are the reality of domestic violence in Queensland—that the number of reported incidents to our police has increased from 58,000 in 2012 to 64,000 in 2013; that there are more than 175 incidents of domestic violence reported every day in Queensland.

Our detachment from the reality of this appalling violence is part of the problem. Phrases like “just another domestic” should not be tolerated. The language we use reflects our attitudes and our culture. Both are key to bringing about change.

Sometimes we see domestic and family violence as somebody else’s problem—something that affects someone else. When we think like this, it is easy to dismiss it as a problem between two individuals and that it is not our business. Domestic violence is still in some sectors of our community seen as a private matter. This means that the horrific violence and abuse of those who experience it continues to be hidden, and invisible, behind closed doors. This de-humanisation of domestic and family violence is part of the problem of why it continues.

Domestic and family violence is not someone else’s problem. It is our problem. It is only when we take responsibility at a community level to eliminate the violence that we will be successful. The responsibility for change is for everyone, not just government and the service sector. It is the responsibility of business, media, our neighbourhoods, and each and every one of us as individuals.

Throughout the last few months, the Taskforce has travelled the State, listening to the stories from survivors, their families and friends, from communities and from service providers, both government and non-government. We have received numerous responses from our callout for contributions. We have listened to the problems in our justice response. We have heard ideas as to how domestic violence can be reduced and responses improved.

It is time for the stories to be shared. These are the human stories of our community. If we as a community are to effect change, then the stories must be told. We have to hear them, however difficult that may be.

I have been deeply touched by the personal stories I have heard and read in the contributions. They are truly sobering reading. They express so much pain, stress and trauma. Yet, they are full of hope, determination, bravery, survival.

Storytelling is in all of us. It is a natural human response to the experience of living and witnessing. The act of telling assuages fear and begins healing. Stories show us ideas in human action.
Domestic violence is still in some sectors of our community seen as a private matter. This means that the horrific violence and abuse of those who experience it continues to be hidden, and invisible, behind closed doors. This de-humanisation of domestic and family violence is part of the problem of why it continues.

They inspire us to change, and to want to change.

I have been overwhelmed by the courage of those who have written to us and I am so grateful to them for their willingness to be involved. How often have I heard that they are doing so, reaching into dark and terrible times in their lives, to give support and courage to others to come forward? Their voices will not go unheard.

The majority of the stories told were from women; however we also heard the voices of men who have experienced violence, mostly survivors of childhood violence, and also fathers of daughters experiencing domestic violence. They are commended for contributing to the Taskforce’s work.

Each story in this journal is unique, yet similar themes and issues are revealed again and again.

~ that the violence is mostly committed by men against women;
~ that it permeates all sections of society and is aimed at controlling the victim;
~ that victims often do not realise they are experiencing domestic violence, the violence can be inter-generational and the impacts deeply affect and continue to affect them, decades after the abuse has ended;
~ that there is a sense that they will not be believed, they feel a sense of shame, live in a constant state of fear and tire of having to re-tell their story to different agencies;
~ that they do not know where to go for help and support, yet those who are able to access services, particularly refuges and domestic violence services, find such support invaluable;
~ that the children are affected by exposure to the violence;
~ that victims feel let down by their employers and economic concerns restrict options;
~ that the court process is extremely difficult to negotiate and does not stop the violence;
~ that more could be done to stop the violence re-occurring.

I want each contributor to know that their story has been read; that they have been listened to. It is not possible to include every part of every story in this journal but each one has deepened our understanding of the impacts. This allows the Taskforce to develop an informed report to the Premier on ways to make the changes we need. Each one of us must have the fortitude to say that we will not tolerate domestic and family violence.

I want to express my gratitude to each person who has contributed to these perspectives to deepen our awareness, our knowledge and our understandings.

The Honourable Quentin Bryce AD CVO
Chair
Premier’s Special Taskforce on Domestic and Family Violence
WILL ANYONE BELIEVE ME?
Just another domestic.
Just a domestic dispute gone wrong.
It’s a private, family matter.

Sound familiar? These are the attitudes pervasive in our culture and reflected in many of the contributions. The attitude that domestic and family violence is tolerated and condoned is ever present.

From the outside we were the perfect middle class family, intelligent, sporting and attractive.

Most women are killed by someone close to them. Most men are killed by strangers.

A dirty secret which is unreported or under-reported, except in the most extreme of circumstances.

I am currently in good health, from a stable family with no history of family violence, no history of mental illness and have completed tertiary education.

If you’re a woman, you were more likely to be killed by someone you lived with and on average a woman is killed by her partner every 8.3 days.

We were a middle class family with both parents being teachers.

I find that the case becomes undeniable once you actually look into the sheer number of cases of domestic violence in Australia. We all just can’t sit by and let it happen.
Domestic violence perpetrator speaks

By Alyssa Allen, ABC

It’s not often that you get to hear a story from a perpetrator of domestic violence. Ross* from Ballarat has been abusive physically and emotionally to his partner for the last 30 years. Amazingly, they are still together and participating in couple’s counselling to mend their relationship.

Ross says he started counselling because he did not want to lose his partner.

“I’ve been verbally abusive, emotionally abusive, sexually abusive, financially abusive, the whole gamut unfortunately.”

“She has stuck by me, she’s been very supportive, very caring, very loving, I certainly don’t deserve her.”

He says there are no excuses for his actions.

“There are not even any reasons, there are things you can blame but when it comes down to it, it’s really your own decision.”

He became abusive as he was unable to deal with his frustration.

“The violence, the abuse comes from me not handling that frustration, taking it out on my partner.”

Ross says the counselling has allowed him to become less irritable and short-tempered.

“In the last 18 months, I think I’ve changed a lot, I’m a work in progress, I can see I am making improvements, I can see that by the way my partner behaves, the more relaxed she is.”

He acknowledges that the program has been a game changer for his relationship.

“No one likes to admit that they’ve been wrong in the way that they’ve behaved and that they’ve caused pain to the one they love and when you admit that and really believe it, it’s very hard to accept, but it encourages you to try harder.”

Ross hopes his story will encourage other couples to seek help.

“If coming on the radio and talking about it can encourage one couple to get couple counselling and improve their relationship it’s worth it.”

“Now I understand what it’s like for my partner. It’s not fair and I’m ashamed of it.”

Ross* is a pseudonym.
Domestic violence allows the perpetrator to gain control of the victim through fear and intimidation. Gaining the victim’s compliance even temporarily reinforces the perpetrator’s use of these tactics to control.

There are hundreds of stories like this.

I wasn’t allowed to be happy

I also did all the stereotypical enabling like covering up to family and friends, minimising his behaviour...avoiding social events.

[He] was only mildly physically [abusive] because I think he knew that if he crossed that line and left a bruise it would make it easy for me to humiliate him by calling the police and presenting the evidence... Instead, there was no illegal behaviour, just constant verbal, sexual, financial and psychological abuse to try to control and bully me.

...my husband was threatening to commit suicide, had a rope in his hand...

The fact that amongst those thousands of communications [he] said some loving things which counted when they shouldn’t have. The obsessive ownership was the problem and just because the messages said “I love you baby” did not make them any less damaging for me than the messages that said “you will pay for doing this to me” especially when I’m receiving both messages in the space of an hour.

Families can handle and cope with a few incidents but the constant nature of ours and the vast diversity of the pronged attacks meant the family had little time to recover.

Everything he has accused me or my family of doing is what he has actually done himself.

I am so sad and desperate and in so much pain and just don’t want to be here anymore. It’s too hard...Every morning I wake up and try and find somewhere to put the pain. I cry inside the wardrobe, in the shower, on the floor under the kitchen sink.

...my daughter, her anxiety increased, mental health deteriorated and drinking increased. My wife took the brunt of increasingly distressing phone calls. Until my wife received a text from my daughter’s partner “[your daughter] has committed suicide” and he then telephoned me at work telling me [she] was dead...I tried to understand and make sense of it all. When I became aware of her situation I tried to get her to leave her partner and I begged him to let her go/kick her out. Until for her, there became “nothing” left to live for!

I would beg her to stop calling me names as it was hurtful and demeaning, she would then laugh and say you deserve it and then do it even more, as though it gave her gratification knowing that she had the upper hand and that I would not fight back.
I remember the blood and him bellowing.

The first time he was violent it came out of the blue. It was an intense, terrifying experience. He flew into a rage over something I’ve long since forgotten. What I do remember is his hands closing around my throat. I remember gasping. I remember the fear, and I remember the way he watched my eyes as I slipped towards unconsciousness. He would release the pressure just as I felt myself sinking into blackness, allowing me just enough oxygen so that he could begin the process again. I don’t know how long he did this for, like a cat playing with a mouse, making sure just enough life remained to sustain the game for longer. I don’t remember what happened afterwards. I just remember feeling petrified and trapped. I wanted him to leave then, I asked him to. He refused. What could I do?

...in a pre-planned drunken rage my ex-fiancé drove to my home in the middle of the night and punched his way through glass to gain access into my home. What followed was the most terrifying experience of my life. Not only did he want us to die together in the bathtub, he’d brought his own kitchen knives (one of them as big as my forearm) to execute his plan. I fled to my neighbour’s house and in his attempts to get at me he punched through the thick panels of glass in the front door and was physically fighting my neighbour to try to set my clothing on fire with a cigarette lighter all the while bellowing repeatedly “This is it! This is the end! If I can’t have you no one can.

I believe the way he hit me was always controlled, he did it in such a way so that it didn’t leave bruising.
The violence could consist of him punching me, spitting on me, choking me, depriving me of sleep and threatening others would kill or rape me. He would threaten to harm me and family members by associates if I made complaints to police. He would complete these violent actions with the children watching and would threaten to do these acts with a baby in my arms. I was often left bruised with multiple contusions, black eyes, pain, on occasion concussion and living in great fear for my life…If surviving through the relationship and leaving were not personally taxing enough, the next six years afterwards have also proved to be incredibly difficult as my former partner continued to pursue us relentlessly.

…he tried to suffocate me when I was asleep…

On an access visit, [he] strangled me and I almost lost my life…I was strangled twice…This is where I lost my consciousness…once my body went limp [he] let go of my neck and I got up and tried to run away from him but he caught me and sat on me again and strangled me a second time.

My terror started as far back as I can remember…from around the age of five, at every opportunity I was the subject of abuse. My father, kicking, punching, threatening to slit my throat, raping me…

One relationship involved three years emotional abuse ultimately ending in physical abuse. The final episode, which ended the relationship, involved the perpetrator physically abusing me by trying to choke me, holding a knife to my throat, then punching me in the back of the head.

Once she got me to a place where she could see that I wouldn’t talk back or question her…this was when the physical stuff started. Just a slap or shove to start with and then that slowly increased to full blown and terribly violent and repeated beatings, often in front of the children and often with leather straps, fists, knees, kicking, kitchen utensils…she would tell the children “this is what happens when you don’t do as you are told or if you upset mummy”…she forbade contact with family and friends…I was allowed no money…I felt trapped and alone, frightened and very intimidated…I felt it was important to stay there to protect my children…the hardest part of all this was and still is that no-one believes or accepts that domestic violence against men perpetrated by women exists.

I won’t say it escalated because unlike other women’s stories, my experience of domestic violence started fairly brutally…If he wasn’t actually being violent, he would use his demeanour to remind me that he could be violent at any time. I was always on edge. That expression “walking on eggshells” was entirely accurate.

He punched me numerous times to the head because I couldn’t stop our [baby]…from crying…I was nursing [the baby]…[the baby] was screaming and he lost it—punch punch punch, leaning over this tiny baby who was now covered in [the baby’s] mother’s blood…I spent the night…cuddling my baby, scratching the dried blood flecks out of [the baby’s] hair with my nail and sobbing.

We were a middle class family…I recall being beaten when I told the truth about why my mother had black eyes and couldn’t hear because her eardrums were perforated from beatings. The physical injuries heal, but it is hard to recover from the mental anguish of living in something akin to a war zone. The helplessness and fear you feel from watching a loved one beaten and humiliated is awful…
He saw my body as his. He would regularly force me to have sex.

I was forced to have sex with my husband in front of his brother... I was choked on more occasions than I can count. He raped me... I was never taken out on social occasions unless absolutely necessary, such as our children's engagement parties and their wedding... My friends were not allowed to phone when he was home... no one was allowed to come into the home... he made sure I cried everyday... I was told what time I had to go to bed... all my mail was read... my emails were checked regularly... he tried to drown my [dog]... he shot my mother's [pet]... he has convinced my children I was addicted to substances.

He went from drugs to alcohol... he would force sex onto me... threaten to choke me and end my life then seven years ago he busted my eye socket and beat me... he had me on the ground with a belt around my throat.

I will never forget the waves of revulsion, how violated I felt. My skin crawls to this day. I feel a wave of nausea. I showered for hours, sobbing as I tried to scrub away the layer of shame and humiliation.

I couldn’t sleep at night, convinced I could smell petrol. He had told me that he would burn us all to death in our beds. He’d show us.

The sheer length he went to and the time he invested in my harassment is truly terrifying. To be phoning constantly day and night, contacting every person I had ever known, to be impersonating public figures, to be engaging others in his behaviour and to be threatening law enforcement should truly illustrate how deranged and dangerous this individual is. I believe that this should be seriously taken as an indicator of the threat that he posed to my safety. I believe that no matter how trivial an event may seem, the police need to document every event as it may be used to compile a case needed to intervene in the situation.

He harassed me off [social media]... Everyone suggested I remove myself from the internet but as an unemployed woman people don’t realise that the internet is my lifeline. I shouldn’t have to hide as I’m not the one doing anything wrong. The harassment continues and wears me down and I become his girlfriend again and feel safer rather than risk turning him down and being assaulted worse.

Constant phone calls at all hours of the night and morning which resulted in a silent number but when they were able to find that one it had to be changed.

Quiz me about where I was going and what I was doing. Send 30–40 text messages to me while he was at work. He even put the “Find my iphone” App on my phone so he could track my every move... He plays mind games and manipulates me to a point where I think I am going crazy.

I was advised that a concerned member of the community was worried about my mental health and therefore submitted a Justice Examination Order Application to have me assessed... I believe he should be penalized for misusing this service however I don’t know how to go about this... he has turned his daughter right against me with his brainwashing to the point that she doesn’t want to spend time with me.

The children had also become fearful of the phone ringing... They unfortunately overheard many abusive messages being left by him on the phone. In messages left he threatened harm to us all, mocked us, spoke of sickness and sexual acts, swore, screamed, threatened court action and would continue until the phone message bank was full.

...every Saturday, you had the fear that you could be shot along with your mother and siblings by your own father, fuelled by alcohol and yet another loss on the horses “get the gun out. I’m gonna shoot the lot of you”. 
attitude

noun: a settled way of thinking or feeling about something.

Nobody told me it wasn’t my fault.

I knew it wasn’t right, I didn’t know what to do.

I was living in constant fear and began to believe that he wanted to kill me. I thought I was being paranoid but the fear was real. I had nightmares, and lived in a state of constant anxiety... I suffered depression and saw a psychologist etc but never ever told them about the violence. I never thought it was relevant, I believed the problem was with me.

The saddest part was, my mother was too afraid to even contact the police... No one knows what my mother has been through. She doesn’t want to tell anyone as she is afraid people will call her weak for not ever doing anything about it...

I was married for 34 years before my marriage dissolved (I left my family home terrified of my husband) due to domestic violence. Not one member of my extended family knew of my "closed door life"... Many times I would lay awake, no other man yelling at his partner/wife in my neighbourhood. Was it me, not being a good wife?? I knew it wasn’t right [but] I didn’t know what to do. Fear, embarrassment, guilt...

I had terrible self esteem. I truly believed I was responsible for his violence. I had been told since I was a little girl that I was shit, that I was worthless. I felt absolutely, completely powerless. Worse, over time I felt dependent.

Domestic violence victims are emotionally crippled and weak from the abuse but we are not stupid.
If only men weren’t socialised to believe that this is true, that women are property...I lived through hell at the hands of this man. I want people to understand how easy it is to feel trapped. I was immobilised through terror, through hopelessness, through absolute powerlessness. I want people to stop asking “why does she stay” and start asking “why does he do that?”.

...they have ingrained core beliefs of some kind of entitlement and power...

The biggest issue I have is wondering how do you help people who will not help themselves? In this situation, both my father and my brother are men...they don’t believe they need help, or they won’t admit that they need help—it’s a form of weakness to seek help.

Boys need to be taught that women are not their property.
Both my family and I have suffered many broken relationships from his behaviour as we were blamed for his behaviour, or it was just easier for them to distance themselves from us as they were generally very frightened of him. His behaviour made us very isolated and I constantly felt helpless...there were many feelings of embarrassment and shame.

Too often people are waiting for an expert, they’re waiting for someone who might have more information or they’re waiting for the systems that are put in place to do that job. And what we really want to do is get people to think about how important bystanders can be in creating an environment that says men’s violence against women is not okay.”

Nobody could help me. Relatives, colleagues and most of our “friends” seemed to turn the blind eye...I guess people told themselves it was none of their business, and anyway, to them he seemed likeable and popular so what I said about him didn’t make sense to them...It was easy for him to isolate me, and in the end there was nowhere for me to go.

They didn’t believe there was a Mr Hyde part because he saved that for me alone.

Having a conversation with your mates about the way they talk about women is good bystander behaviour.

Reaching out and expressing concern to a friend who seems increasingly isolated is good bystander behaviour.

Talking to your family about gender roles, pointing out that really drunk woman in a bar to staff, or creating a distraction in a heated moment, all of those things are good bystander behaviour.

My children don’t want to know, they say “this is between you and dad”.

Family members did not want to be involved in our domestic affairs/fallout.

He assassinated my character and reputation, and people believed him.

You’ve just got to call it every time you see it, you know, not in my neighbourhood, not in my town, not in my school, yeah, you’ve just got to keep calling it.

Men have to stand up and take on their mates and their family members and tell other men to knock it off. This is about women’s lives and children’s lives.

My family took his side. It’s one of the saddest things that ever happened to me.
All of this became more insulting as it was happening during the “one punch” drama when everyone was considering an eight year sentence for one punch assaults. I don’t know why the one punch I receive counted for nothing. Maybe if I was a man it would have mattered.

Think about it like a pyramid, and if you’ve got sexist jokes, objectifying language, strict gender roles as the foundations of that pyramid, that’s what all the further abuses are built on. So if you have a problem with rape and murder at the top, you need to come all the way down and think about having a problem with all these other things. And that’s a real challenge for people to think about how am I implicitly, and in some cases explicitly, contributing to that.

I was taught at a very young age what goes on at home, stays at home.

Evil flourishes when good men do nothing.

When there is a bushfire, flood or national crisis, suddenly the governments, council, agencies all band together and set up centres for people to get all the information and help they need. The same needs to be done with domestic violence...overnight government can change laws on bikies, get national security laws changed...

Grim statistics alone are not enough, you have to back them up with the all too human stories, the human faces. And that means the perpetrators, the front line workers, the support groups, those people who have to mop up and rebuild afterwards. Again...this is very challenging for the media in domestic violence cases, sadly except in the most extreme circumstances, where the aftermath of the abuse is played out through coroners’ courts and murder trials. And in the process it renders this daily catalogue of violence and intimidation largely unreported or almost prosaic.

If the same incident had happened on the street, in the general public, and not in a domestic relationship, the offender would have been convicted.

Darkness recedes from places where you can shine a light

Domestic, the word itself implies behind closed doors, it implies privacy.

It takes a community to protect people from perpetrators of domestic violence and denounce their behaviour. People must be willing to contact police when they hear or witness acts of domestic violence.

The conversation has to go back to square one, why we’re allowing these things to happen, and why is it embarrassing to admit that you may be of a victim of someone else’s control.

It’s time to address personal, public and official apathy.

The attitude and the apathy people have towards women and men who have suffered from domestic violence is just deplorable. Your family and friends and sometimes workmates either don’t believe or don’t want to get involved. Often you get told well maybe you deserved it.

What does the word domestic do, what does it evoke?

Does domestic psychologically remove us from the responsibility?

Is it time for the word domestic to go?

Perhaps remove the domestic from it, then it might, you might get more of a sense of community ownership of the issue, community responsibility.

If they don’t understand fully what domestic violence is about it will continue and continue.

We need to see more of this invisible epidemic, but the system that’s designed to protect your clients is also one that keeps [media] from reporting on it.

Let’s not let history keep repeating itself and start treating domestic violence victims like worthy victims.
...if the taskforce does not identify strategies to assist children the generational cycle of domestic violence is likely to continue.

[He] was one of nine children in his family whose mother and father got drunk every night and the dad beat them up; this is just what he was subjected to growing up. I am not making excuses for him but he saw that as “the norm”.

My earliest memory is of my father gripping my mum’s hands and feet together…and smashing her constantly against the wall whilst yelling at her…I’ve had the fear of him being violent drilled into me from a very young age…The past [number of] months, however, have resulted in [my brother] taking on the same violent purges that my father has a tendency for...now I can see why he was so angry at my father, and I can also see them as being mirrored reflections of each other. Both so angry, both with such big egos, both an absolute threat, amazingly, to each other.

I am 57 years old and I have spent my whole life living with domestic violence in one form or another...my father would literally pick me up and throw me across the room...when I began to mature I was then also sexually abused by my father. Always following a severe beating and being told not to tell anyone...when I was 13 my mother took her own life…I just went from one bad marriage to another.
WHO WILL HELP ME?
This system is only as good as the information that travels through it. If we don’t have accurate and timely information, it just doesn’t work and it puts the people at risk.
in·te·grat·ed

adjective: combining or coordinating separate elements so as to provide a harmonious, interrelated whole

No one organisation or agency can do it alone. It takes a village. It takes all of us together to work that out.

...the way the various services interact make it impossible for abused women and children to escape and move on safely.

All the work’s just too big for any one agency to do on its own.

Why we do this work collectively is we want to hold the men who perpetrate this violence accountable.

Each agency does what it does best. It doesn’t have to think about everything else, it only has to do what it does best. So we leverage off each other...each of us don’t have to know everything. And we don’t have to carry all that risk. As one agency we don’t have to carry all that risk.

This system is only as good as the information that travels through it. If we don’t have accurate and timely information, it just doesn’t work and it puts the people at risk.

Domestic violence is far too complex to deal with on their own. So we need to do it as a team, all working together for the common cause. And everyone has their own specialist abilities.

Integrated response allows for real time collaboration which is incredibly impressive.
You may ask why did I go back and believe me I have asked myself the same question but there are so many emotions involved and other considerations. I was for the most part a stay at home mum, and had no financial support and because I kept the violence hidden from my family and friends I literally felt that I had no choice but to stay…I always hoped things would change.

He has forged bank documents to sell properties, opened bank accounts and credit cards in my name. Cancelled my health insurance. His intent was to leave me with nothing and his actions have done so…companies should be diligent in protecting consumer’s rights…

I attempted to access emergency accommodation for my son and myself and was advised by DV Connect that I would not be entitled unless I quit my job (which I now needed more than ever).

During the quest to help [my daughter]...I read as much as I could about domestic violence and I started to ask my mother and two of my siblings questions, as although I had let it recede into the past I had not completely forgotten my past, my mother, my brothers and sister and myself had all been victims of domestic violence.

I couldn’t afford to keep my house…I was forced to sell the house for much less than it was worth because of his financial abuse. He paid very little in child support, only paying something when it is in his advantage to do so. Like before going to court for the Domestic Violence Order, then it stops.

...after one night of copious amounts of alcohol and [drugs]...I drove [my brother] home...when he tried to take the wheel... He tried, unsuccessfully, to smash a beer bottle, which he was intending on stabbing me in the throat with...I’ve had constant fear thrown into me growing up afraid of getting my father angry, but this was the worst, and could’ve cost me my life.

Because I owned a house I could not access any government help, I didn’t fit the criteria.

Intentional underpayment of child support is another form of abuse against the mother and her child.

I left that night with [no money] in my personal bank account. Within an hour my ex-husband had changed the online password to our joint bank account, leaving me with no access to any money. It was only about a week later that he served me with family court proceedings wherein he proposed to become my son’s primary carer and severely limit my contact with him. As he had taken all of our money he was able to instruct solicitors and brief a barrister for this, while I was in no position to do so.

While there could be many reasons for a domestic violence, the fundamental one is a gender inequality, especially in terms of a financial dependence of one on another’s support.

I was traumatised and in no fit position to look for work...this pressure to find work when you are not remotely ready to is an area I think needs review.

The separations were unsustainable and brief because he made sure I didn’t have any money.

I spent the first 20 years of my life living in a household dominated by domestic abuse and violence (physical and psychological). I have fought the psychological effects of that for the last 67 years and have managed to lead a reasonably productive life. However I have never overcome its effects, and my life has been marred by long periods of psychological ill-health which impacted my career prospects, earning capacity and quality of life.

I am an employee of 17 years and pretty much about to be dismissed any day due to the effects of my home situation. I have been personally humiliated, monitored, refused leave for court (in regards to my domestic violence applications), told to “sort my shit out and not bring personal life to work” and refused time off when I feared for my children’s safety... my workplace blamed me for times my ex husband turned up to work...they wouldn’t even let me change my hours by 15 mins as requested by [the] shelter in regards to my safety.

It is well documented that leaving a domestic violence relationship is extremely difficult for a woman, due to a lack of financial and social supports in her life, not to mention it is extremely dangerous. It is not up to Centrelink to decide if that woman has gone back to her partner too many times.

For the first month I practically lived in my car...It is not the first time I have lived in my car and I have no doubt many other women with children find themselves in the same situation...finding a home for my pets has now become my biggest problem.

My workplace soon gave up trying to protect me and instead chose to harass me out of the job which I had attended faithfully for three years. They refused to give me a reference.
He said to me that, if I left him, he would get the kids and I would never see them again.

I went back the next morning. I was scared. I knew if I went back, I could placate him. I would know where he was. I wouldn’t have to watch over my shoulder. Besides, my kids needed their dad, didn’t they?

My children spent their formative years as innocent victims in a war zone. I have to live with this guilt. I was unable to protect them on my own. Not unwilling. Unable.

As his focus changed from me to the children, his behaviour towards them was identical to the behaviour he exhibited when he was charged with stalking me.

...in a [physically] violent episode...my youngest...who was still very young at the time stood between us pleading with his father not to hurt me. I was terrified as I couldn’t move [due to the attack] and was unable to get my son out of the situation when his father was still in a violent rage.

The hospital where she was having ante-natal care were notified so that they ensured that she had an alias for when she presented to the hospital, so she couldn’t be tracked in that way.

...got in touch with the school to ensure that safety planning was put in place for the children who attended that particular school.

we do everything we can do to try to actually work with that family to try to figure out that situation, involving those specialised services to support that woman and empower that woman to actually be able to protect her children.

This matter demonstrated the very serious impact of violence on our client and her young daughter having to live in fear and in hiding away from friends and family.

She was forced to change her name and that of her child. Ultimately upon obtaining the order she was able to, and did, leave the country in an attempt to minimise future risk [to herself and her child].

However, now I have further problems with my ex-husband as my son has recently disclosed abuse at the hands of another person who lives in my ex-husband’s home...the investigating officer told me it was policy not to prosecute when a complainant is under five...Child Safety then refused to investigate on the basis that I was a parent “willing and capable” of protecting the child...they did helpfully advise me that if I resumed the visits they would investigate MY capacity as a protective parent. The Child Support agency refuse to amend our assessment...they claim that my actions in withholding [my son from visits with his father] are unreasonable because Child Safety have not seen fit to investigate.

My eldest [child] ended up on a Mental Health Plan for...months after having [a few] breakdowns in this time. This started at the age of nine...The school worked with the family and psychologist to develop her strategies and resilience.

My children are still suffering. My oldest son suffers from [post-traumatic stress disorder]. He can’t sleep at night, disturbed by the constant replaying of the violence he heard when he was little. He is safe now, but his father’s legacy continues to torment him. He is receiving support through a mental health service...it has been 10 years since I left his father.
Imagine that you are an aboriginal woman in a remote Queensland community. It is hot. Very hot. And very dry. You are three hours away from the next community and nine hours away from Woolworths, for the half of the year that the road is open. There are 75 houses, 500 people and one phone box. A roasted chicken costs $50 and a tube of toothpaste costs $14. There are limited services. It takes ten minutes to walk from one side of town to the other. You have lived here all your life. This is all you know. This is normal for you. Your family lives here. Your support network lives here. Your three children live here. He lives here.

He beats you. Repeatedly. He rapes you. He controls you. He threatens you with black magic. His family lives here too.

You can’t complain or your children will be taken away and you will spend the next 18 months fighting to get them back. That happened to your sister last year. You can’t complain or his family will seek retribution. You can’t leave because this is all you know. His uncle works at the Skytrans office. His cousin works at the local shop that sells mobile phones. His sister works at the petrol station. Even if you manage to leave, he will find you and you will be moving to a place where you have nothing, no family, no support.

He assaults you in the street. The police see it. He goes to court. He blames you. You tell the police officer the truth of what happens. The police say that they’ll bring it up in court. He is not taken away from his community because this is all he knows. The matter is adjourned. You wait.

You return home after court with him. You put your name at housing. You are on the list. There are 20 before you. And 50 houses in total. You are expected to wait until 2018. Housing is run by the council. His Aunty works at the council.

A few months go by. You try not to make him angry. You see a counsellor. She tells you what you already know. If you can’t leave your community, then the violence will simply be less if you stay with him, than if you leave.

You ask the Constable how long you have to wait. He says he doesn’t know. He said that he wasn’t in court the last two times, it was a prosecutor from Cairns.

You remember Cairns, they flew you there five years ago with two broken arms. You told everyone that you fell off a horse.

Court comes around again. It’s been three months. He returns home again. You’re scared and you don’t understand. Why can’t they just make him leave? The Constable tells you that the prosecutor doesn’t know. It’s the defence lawyer that is adjourning the case. You wait. No‑one talked about you in court that day.

He threatens you not to say anything. He punches you in the stomach so it doesn’t show. He always does that. Child Safety spoke to you last week. They didn’t take your children away but they said there is to be no more violence in the house. You can’t control it. The court date is coming up in three weeks. Hopefully something can happen then…

A Domestic Violence Order is eventually made. He hits you in the street again. The whole process starts again.
A large portion of the women that we work with have English as a second language, the multicultural women are hugely vulnerable.

Often these women arrive [at the service] with very little to no English...even locating an interpreter can be difficult.

[She] had left the home she shared with her husband approximately four days earlier; she had been sleeping in her car and utilising support from friends for short periods for showers and food.

[He] has also made threats to have [her] visa revoked and has attempted to blackmail her that he will do this unless she pays him money.

[She] is a [foreign] national and currently holds a bridging visa; her partner is an Australian citizen...the abuse was predominantly of a controlling nature; such as not allowing her to speak to family in [her country] and demanding she speak only English, restricting her access to leave the home without him, restricting her access to money, clothes and food and demanding full access to her work schedule and payslips once she began paid employment.

She has been told that if she doesn’t obey her husband that she will be deported—she believes this because her husband is the one who knows all the rules in Australia.

Often the fear of deportation or losing access to their children will keep them in their abusive situation. For a migrant woman to leave domestic violence it is even more harrowing as they have generally no access to Centrelink or services. They have little or no understanding of Australian laws and have lived with a partner or husband who has lied to them about our laws.

One woman’s story stuck with me, her name was Sofia, she was from Chile, and what struck me was that she was an incredibly successful woman in Chile. She had a son, she was a manager for a major multinational company, she had her own house. She lived much the same life as what we would probably all live here in Brisbane and in Queensland. And then she met an Australian man and she made the mistake of falling in love and she came to Australia and then suffered domestic violence and she needed to leave. And unfortunately got caught in this system which meant that she was stuck here and she couldn’t work, she couldn’t get any welfare support, she didn’t know anybody.

[She] was a non-English speaking woman who required an interpreter...[she] also indicated when police attended the event they did not use an interpreter for [her] and took the aggressor’s statement and did not seek a statement from [her].

As [my client] had some language difficulties as was feeling very scared in court, I attempted to advocate for [her] in court; the Magistrate informed me that I am not allowed to speak as I am not a lawyer.

As support workers we strive to provide these women care, usually through the use of interpreters, as often we are the only people in these women’s lives, as they have left family back in their own country.
My husband and I had been together for 10 years, constantly marred with domestic violence and psychotic and alcohol fuelled episodes to the point he would hurt me in his sleep and never remember in the morning. Never understanding why the police were called and my teeth were missing, nor how a broken hand had occurred.
I had endured 12 years of abuse which hid under the guise of alcohol and drug problems. Mental illness was also an issue as well... When I was young, single and childless I loved weekends. But I grew to hate them with a passion. Something horrible would always happen on Friday or Saturday night.

Sometimes if I knew he was drinking after work I would remove myself and my family from the home to avoid violence...I would arrive home in the morning to find my house trashed, broken furniture and personal items scattered over the floor. Arriving home to that left me feeling terrified...

Within [a few] weeks he was drinking and taking drugs again and I was depressed and suicidal...I had sought counselling in various forms and had taken him to countless doctors, therapists, begged, pleaded, threatened, everything under the sun.

My daughter experienced a mental health crisis. She is much better now, but I won't forget paramedics scraping her off the bathroom floor after she attempted to take her own life. After two years of therapy and medication...she has improved dramatically...

She was highly vulnerable as she was identified as having a mental health issue and was self-harming. She was fearful to leave her home due to events of violence. She was highly isolated and found it difficult to provide [legal] instructions in an organised path even with the support of her caseworker.

Yes alcohol is a major issue. Alcohol is not the cause of domestic violence but alcohol can go alongside a domestic violence.

Great consternation was expressed by our political leaders when a few young men were being "king hit" and killed through alcohol fuelled violence but they do not seem as proactive in relation to the much greater problem of alcohol generated domestic violence which predominantly affects women and children.
I wasn’t coping at all and knew that I needed help and that was the first time I reached out. I just thought to myself there has to be something out there. I looked up domestic violence on the internet and came up with the DV Connect line. Eventually I called them and that was the best decision I made; they put me in touch with domestic violence places in my area. Most were extremely helpful in at least helping me put together the puzzle of my relationship and making me realise I was in extreme danger if I ever went back to him.

I was shaking uncontrollably and wanted to ring the police but I was terrified that if I did, it would make things worse. I literally didn’t know what to do and I was unaware at that time of any domestic violence help lines. (I say here it would be useful to have these services advertised regularly on television and radio so victims know that there is help available.)

...what has been done to women in these circumstances cuts away any confidence in yourself, building up that strength is vital to even being confident in looking for employment. These are unique situations that need unique solutions.

...Lifeline and DV Connect sheltered me and the kids. Those organisations did a great job, but their halls were already full with women far worse off than me...I approached lawyers and psychologists for some advice...it was good to be believed like that by all of those professional people.

...after losing count of how many phone calls I made, finally stumbled onto [a domestic violence service] and I telephoned them once a week on a set day to let them know I was still alive.

I have found that the system that people have to go through with lawyers, housing and even Centrelink wanting. Their people have no understanding or compassion and no skills for dealing with people who have suffered from domestic violence.

This matter is a positive example of a number of different services working together to ensure the client understands the process and is able to advocate for appropriate conditions for the facts.

...We hold the woman at the centre of any responses that we are formulating. She gets to choose what’s going to make her safer and what’s going to make her less safe. She is the expert in her own life. We will give her the menu of all the things that we can offer but she chooses what’s going to work best for her.

We gather as much information as possible in each case. We don’t work from partial information. We don’t work only from self-report of the offender. We get as much information together and this is what we put together and we combine it and we re-combine it and we look at the constellation of risk factors in this particular case.”

It’s focused on the victim or the aggrieved, but it takes into account children, the respondent, and any other person that is affected by the violence.

Specialist Advice Clinics are critical in early intervention...Also provide safety for [victims] during court mentions as they are not required to enter the court room yet still able to negotiate with the respondent in a safety focused approach.

Early intervention of representation can ensure that appropriate protection orders are in place so that the relationship between parents and children can occur with minimal exposure to Domestic Violence Orders.
After attending [specialised] counselling, I have the right to be treated with respect!!! I don’t have to agree with everything he says or does. He can’t use this anger to control me, [this] was insightful. Realising there is a cycle of violence was eye opening. During this time I was also seeking help for him. Counselling for him was limited but I did find it.
SHOULD I CALL THE POLICE?
Justice is about equality and fairness between human beings.

The law provides a very powerful, symbolic message encompassing society’s values or the limits of what society considers to be acceptable.

I went to the police and reported my father, documenting decades of abuse in a lengthy statement. To this day, I remain grateful to that police officer. I could not believe his calm and investigative manner, he listened patiently and professionally... [then my mother] told me one day that she would rather die than for people to know what he did to me and what she didn’t do...I am now 52 and I am again the powerless, voiceless child that I had always been.

In my personal opinion, it is the fact that it is not addressed as a serious crime that domestic violence continues to happen and at the alarming rates it does. I feel the minute it is considered a crime, we will see a dramatic change in the amount of incidents.

The Magistrate clearly articulated the orders being made and the powers of the court. [My client] left the court identifying she felt the court had listened to her and supported her need for protection.

I went to the police station and made a statement and they took photos of my face. The police suggested domestic violence counselling. I had no idea what domestic violence was.

This time I rang the police, and it was the first and last time I ever did, the response basically, who cares. It’s his house, he can do what he wants and they didn’t even care that I was left stranded on the road with my children. I had to ring my sister to come get us.

Aggrieved [victims] are not supported to be [in court], they don’t have the transport, childcare, it’s just not practical in many ways for them to be there.

Our policy is that you should charge where we have sufficient evidence and remember, that in a criminal court that evidence is beyond reasonable doubt, as opposed to in a domestic violence situation where we’re asking for an application, which is on the balance of probabilities.

Nobody thought to tell me “this is his court day” so I could know that this day he would be especially angry at me.
I told [the Constable] about the physical harm to my daughter and the threats to my other son. The Constable’s response was “let him have the kids, it’s so close to Christmas”.

I will never recommend turning to the police to anyone in danger. I give up. I am alone in this and I accept that now.

It was difficult to obtain [legal] instructions as often several appointments were needed. If you raised an issue that she was not ready to communicate about, it increased her anxiety and made her unwell and she required the appointments to stop.

[After a violent attack which included attempts to set me alight] he spent one night in a suburban lock up and was let out on bail by the courts the next day. Despite being assured that Queensland Police would inform me if he was released, this did not happen... My dealings with law enforcement and the court system left a whole lot to be desired and as a result I felt extremely exhausted, angry and unheard during the whole process...My experience has left me completely disheartened and openly outraged by our legal system.

...she is on a temporary visa from Russia... the Magistrate spoke respectfully...she spoke in plain English to ensure [my client] was not confused by the process... Upon exiting the court room, [she] identified that she felt more secure, that she was believed and respected by the Magistrate and that she felt more capable of obtaining her independence.

Some police advice was very worthwhile... but other police did not show empathy, for example when I was at the courts waiting for the breach to the protection order to be heard, police officers were openly talking about and mocking the case.

Specially trained police should have responsibility for supervising, monitoring and assuring the quality of police responses.

In hindsight I should have insisted that the police went ahead with the prosecution as nowhere on the system does it say he broke into the house and removed the property. I know as I have personally seen the police records as part of subpoenaed documents for court.

Victims need to be protected from their abusers. Allowing abusers to continually keep dragging the victim back to court to wear them down until they give in is further abuse...Victims already have shattered souls and need to be protected. We have suffered enough.

In my experience of hearings I was placed within a couple of metres of my former partner. In one particular hearing as he left the court he managed to get right beside me and hissed into my ear... The person standing beside you has possibly beaten, threatened, humiliated, intimidated, violated and terrorised you. To stand beside someone who has held that power over you and made you feel worthless is very very tough. Even if during the hearing the victim could be placed out of sight of the perpetrator [that] could make the world of difference...

[The] criminal justice process is a fairly brutal process for victims.

The client’s health deteriorated whilst we were assisting the client due to the stress of the legal proceedings.

He has used the property settlement process to further his sense of power and control. To the point that I have no option but to go to a court process I am not in a financial position to undertake and he knows this and uses it to his advantage.

Eventually, and under increasing financial and psychological pressure from my ex-husband, I agreed to consent orders in respect of both children’s matters and property...
I contacted police on a number of occasions but always received the same comment “this is a soft breach and not enough for a judge to do anything, even if it did get to court, he would just get a warning”. I was told on one occasion that if I wasn’t getting messages that Mr X was going to kill me, I just needed to let things go.

I start the engine and drive off. He starts following me and I am terrified. I drive around [the suburb] with my heart pounding trying to figure out what to do. I can’t go home!! He will get me before I get into the house. I realise I have no choice but to drive to the Police Station. I park the car and run. As soon as I get in there I sit down and start to cry. A male officer comes and speaks to me...He told me that I had to go straight down to the Courthouse if I want to take out a Domestic Violence Order...I’m walking up the steps of the Courthouse and I see his car come into the car park and start cruising round!!

I accepted [his] amendment of protection order as I now know complying with his wishes was the safest way to go.

For a victim to take out a protection order they have to do the paperwork, front the courts and prove their case. This is all very emotionally traumatic and many will not follow through. You need strength to follow through and often victims have been worn down.

One of the issues that regularly gets raised in court by aggrieved [victims] when they’re coming in for variations is that there was an incident that resulted in a breach of the order, that they reported that to the police, the police weren’t called out, and so they went to see the police about it and they said go and apply for a variation, as opposed to charging a breach, which there was clear evidence that there is.

Prior to entering the court for the mention to be heard, [the perpetrator] was acting aggressively in the waiting area and speaking harshly towards court staff.

The [service provider] took the view that because the client had ticked a box on her Protection Order application which asked if she wanted the police to represent her, that the police would represent her at a hearing; [this] is not the case in Brisbane.

Client was not required to appear at second mention due to Legal Aid Queensland representation. This assisted the client’s level of stress.

[She] was extremely distressed by this time and was confused and upset and very afraid. She was at the end of her tether. She had to file material the next day and was ready to give up.

And the fact that someone has a Domestic Violence Order, everyone now just accepts that that doesn’t really mean anything.

I was told by one counsellor they would have to inform the Department of Child Services because a child was involved in a violent situation. How is it now that I am out of it, the law will quite easily say my ex-husband has a right to see his son. None of this makes sense to me.

On several occasions I was told by police that the parental orders needed to be changed to empower them to act. Upon fear that if I entered into court proceedings that the decision by the magistrate may give my former partner more access to the children, I decided against trying to change these documents.
Fear for the safety of her children is an abusive weapon often used against women who find the courage to separate...the Family Law Act repeatedly brings the woman and her children back to the very person they have tried to escape. Even though the possibility of violence is ever present, and against her best judgement, the woman has to hand her children over for visits to her ex-partner. The common belief is that to do otherwise means she might lose all or part of her custody.

Now in the family court, the fact that someone has a Domestic Violence Order is entirely irrelevant. The fact that they live with domestic violence is not irrelevant but it will have to be proved all over again there.

[I remarried and on the children’s next visit to their father] he refused to return the children, even though it was breaching court orders. Instead he threw a letter at me like I was a mongrel dog...I knew he wouldn’t like it that I had remarried however I never thought for a moment that he would stoop this low...$900 later my solicitor advised me she didn’t think a Recovery Order was the way to go due to the level of aggression he was showing, so I didn’t proceed any further...Quite frankly I have lost faith in Local Police and DOCS as it appears to me that someone has to get injured or killed before anyone will listen or do something about it. I believe my ex-husband keeping the children is just his latest tactic to still exercise Power and Control over my life.

Courts should be acting with due caution instead of insisting on shared care arrangements which put the children at risk...At what point does the abuse stop and the legal system steps up and stops allowing the abuse to continue.

[The magistrate] seemed to be more concerned about the respondent’s access to his daughter than [my client] and her daughter’s safety...the magistrate ordered both parties outside to organise some parenting arrangements.

[case involving significant physical abuse to the child and the mother]...I recall as a teenager being told by the counsellor that I should try to get along with my father...I recall being forced to see my father as part of a formal family law court order and that these visits were times spent with him interrogating me about my mother and him being emotionally abusive and blaming me.

Custody of our children was awarded to my husband, a perpetrator of domestic violence with a criminal history. He was never made accountable for his actions, or for the effects his violence towards me has had on our children.

He even admitted to a previous employer that he was out to destroy me and get custody of the children.

The Family Law Act imposes presumptions that force children into the care of abusive fathers even where this poses an unacceptable risk to their safety.

There are still people who get sent out of the room to sort out their parenting plan before the magistrate makes an order in relation to domestic violence. That simply cannot and should not happen.
Domestic violence claims the life of more than one woman every week in Australia. It is the leading cause of death and injury in women under 45.

Children are also victims of domestic abuse and it is estimated that more than one million Australian children are affected by violence in the home.

Dealing with the immediate impact of domestic violence is a task that is handled by state police officers and they are on the frontline, defusing potentially deadly situations and ensuring justice is carried out when abuse happens in the home.

The ABC spent a night with Fairfield police officers in Sydney’s west to find out what it is like to deal with the sad and often violent reality of domestic abuse.

The Friday night shift begins
At 8:30pm on a hot night in Fairfield, located 29 kilometres west of Sydney’s CBD, local police officers Claudia Easson and Edmond Quah have started their night shift patrolling the streets.

Barely 10 minutes into their shift, the officers are called to a domestic dispute at a house in Sindel Close, Bonnyrigg.

A report has come in that a man has hit a woman in the head.

There was an argument over the TV channel. It was a minor that escalated into a verbal. He [the husband] became aggressive and picked a water canister made of stainless steel and threw it at her.

Constable Claudia Easson

Constable Easson knocks on the door and is greeted by the female victim. The two officers walk into the house and the woman requests the ABC not to film.

“Do you want an ambulance to check out your head?” Constable Easson asks the woman.

“No, it’s not much,” she answers.

Constable Easson responds: “That’s a lot of blood.”

The two officers speak to the victim, her husband and their daughter, and they decide the man has to be arrested.

Constable Quah speaks to the husband in Cantonese, explaining that he cannot hit his wife and he will be arrested as a result.

“This is the second time you’ve thrown something at her. You can’t do that,” he says to the man.

“You’re going to get charged with assault.”

The two officers arrest the husband and escort him outside where he is searched and put in the back of a police truck.

It is a typical “domestic” that police officers handle on a regular basis, and Constable Easson explains what happened.

“There was an argument over the TV channel. It was a minor that escalated into a verbal,” she says.

“He [the husband] became aggressive and picked a water canister made of stainless steel and threw it at her.

“It made contact to the back of the head and caused a cut and bleeding.

“The 24-year-old daughter came home and found her mum bleeding. She
locked herself in the room and called the police.”

The husband was taken to Fairfield police station where he was charged with assaulting his wife.

**Fairfield’s ethnic diversity reflected in 133 nationalities**

By 11:30pm, Fairfield police have dealt with another domestic violence assault, a break-and-enter incident, a fight at Fairfield train station and incident in which a person refused to leave a massage parlour.

Fairfield Inspector Stuart Cadden says the shift was a busy and relatively effective one.

“The two domestic violence incidents we’ve been to both resulted in people being arrested for assaulting their partners,” Inspector Cadden says.

“We have a lot of domestic violence matters.

“It’s a bit of a lucky dip with Fairfield; you can come in and have a quiet night or you can come in and have a night you don’t forget.”

Fairfield Acting Superintendent Martin Hayston says domestic violence incidents have become a core responsibility for the police.

“We need to investigate those incidents to ensure people are safe,” Supt Hayston says.

“Sometimes what may only be a verbal argument might be an early warning to us that there is a problem.

“We can then refer people to other services such as family assistance or gambling or alcohol services to try to fix the problem at its core.”

He says police are often called to situations where the victim has already been assaulted.

“By the time people call us it’s too late and there’s actually crimes occurring, whether they be assaults, whether they be malicious damage, whether it be intimidation and fear,” Supt Hayston says.

“We then have the law to use to put the persons before the court who’ve committed crimes and also to put orders into place to protect the victims of domestic violence from further violence.”

According to the 2011 Census, more than half the residents of Fairfield were born overseas and there are over 133 nationalities among the nearly 200,000 population.

Supt Hayston says the station has many bilingual officers to best deal with the diverse community.

“We’re very fortunate here [at Fairfield Police Station],” he says.

“Over a quarter of our workforce does speak a second language. That is a real asset to the command.

“We can only use their language skills to get to the bottom of what’s happened.”

Children are also victims of domestic abuse and it is estimated that more than one million Australian children are affected by violence in the home.
I CAN BE FREE OF THIS
Silence Hides The Violence!
It is when my relationship ended that my story starts.

...things cannot go on any longer like this...

I made the decision that I would now be free of this.

To leave such a relationship is difficult enough, yet when you realise that everything is far from over it can take all your strength to survive.

If I didn’t find a way, I would be trapped for a long time, maybe the rest of my life.

I did explain to him that I and society wouldn’t accept his behaviour anymore.

We are strong women providing care for our future generations – we should be given every chance to leave the abuse and move on from it.

I called the police...when he attacked me with a knife during an argument while he was drunk. For me the line had been crossed. I had tolerated years of emotional, verbal, financial, and sexual abuse but I would not tolerate physical abuse (particularly in front of my children).

I have made the decision finally, finally that I have had enough. No more. That’s it. I know he’s coming back though. He always does. Begs and pleads and promises to be good.

It takes a long time for the wife (me) to realise that this is not a normal life. It took so much courage to leave. I walked out of our home with only my clothes.

I did leave, eventually. It was during my third stay in a women’s refuge...my daughter asked if the reason we weren’t going home to see what Santa had brought them was because Daddy would hurt Mummy again. Something snapped in me then. I just knew there was no going back, only forward. I felt numb.
I no longer want to hide in the shadows, to keep silent.

Seven years on I have a wonderful job and lovely home.

I am grateful for having gone through this experience because I have met many strong women going through the same thing. It has taught me so much. I have even helped strangers with just a few words. It has made me stronger and I will not allow my daughters to go through this and teach my sons that this kind of behaviour is not acceptable.

Regaining yourself and a life after living in domestic violence is a slow step by step process...There are no miraculous recoveries, it’s a journey that takes a long time. Just because you are out of a situation doesn’t mean all is well, there are so many new challenges and further abuses that make life difficult.

The bruises go away and the red marks but the emotional scarring and the mental abuse always stay but you just learn to deal with it.

Twenty plus years down the track, my life is terrific...[my child] is happy and successful.

There is a happy ending to my story, I have beautiful children who are growing up in a way that every child deserves to, in a happy and safe home.

I have found happiness again but I never stop looking over my shoulder for dark shadows.

As a child I was abused and then later raped again by people I trusted. Despite my difficult journey I have refused to be a victim but to live above this life-changing childhood experience. I have worked to help children and young people in many challenging situations.

Once I made that first call to DV Connect I realised that silence on this matter doesn’t do anyone any good and since then I have used my voice the only way I know how and that is to write to whomever might listen and lend my voice to others in the hope that something can change.

I no longer live in fear. It has taken many years to overcome that feeling.
No one really understands domestic violence and the impact it has on your life until you have breathed it, lived it and come out of it, alive. You never fully recover from it, but boy don’t you become stronger from experiencing it. Use that strength to move forward in life and never let anything or anybody hold you back in pursuing your goals.
If you are experiencing domestic violence, or are concerned about someone who is, please refer below. If you are in immediate danger, phone the police on Triple Zero (000).

**DVConnect Womensline**  
(Queensland) is a statewide 24 hours a day, 7 days a week service providing confidential advice and counselling as well as referral to crisis accommodation for women and children affected by domestic violence.  
**Phone 1800 811 811** (this number will not appear on your phone bill)

**DVConnect Mensline**  
(Queensland) is a statewide service (9am to midnight, 7 days a week) supporting men affected by domestic violence.  
**Phone 1800 600 636.**

**1800RESPECT**  
is a national service providing crisis and trauma counselling 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to people affected by sexual assault, domestic violence or family violence.  
**Phone 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732)**

**Immigrant Women’s Support Service**  
offers free confidential, practical and emotional support to immigrant and refugee women from non-English speaking backgrounds and their children who have experienced domestic and/or sexual violence.  
**Phone 07 3846 3490**

**Lifeline**  
provides crisis support and suicide prevention services 24 hours, 7 days a week.  
**Phone 13 11 14**

**beyondblue Support Service**  
provides one-on-one, confidential support with a trained mental health professional.  
**Phone 1300 22 4636**  
(24 hours a day, 7 days a week)

**Kids Helpline**  
is a counselling service for Australian children and young people aged between 5 to 25 years.  
**Phone 1800 55 1800** (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)