

Hi,

I might live in NSW, but supporting this law reform to affect change could be the catalyst to make change nationwide.

My life for the last 7 years has been one of domestic abuse. Most of it was coercive control. Not being able to continue a relationship with my own children. Not being allowed to have facebook, or other social media. Not being allowed to have support from my friend. Being threatened, having my children threatened. Losing one of my jobs because he made me phone up and threaten my friend. Having a dashcam placed in my car and having the trip scrutinised and evaluated and questioned. Phoning work to make sure that I was there (he knew it was my job to answer the phones).

Twice I had him arrested and sent to jail.

You may say why take him back? Well that's coercive control, something I am beginning to get a handle on.

Fast forward and I am finally out of that trap.

However. When I first got away, I had bad anxiety. I made sure that I started and finished work at the time I knew he was getting his own children from school, so my address couldn't be found. Suffering from PTSD I didn't realise how much I was affected until one day I was walking home from work and I saw his car, it went right by me and turned a corner up ahead. He did not have my address. How did he find me? I stopped in the street. My heart was beating fast. I must of looked the fool standing there. Do I turn around and run back to work? What do I do?

After 10 mins I finally decided to move forward. If I could get over the next cross street, he wouldn't find me because of where I could hide. I slowly moved forward and peering over the fences until I saw the car. It was parked some distance down the road, I couldn't see anyone in it. I quickly looked around, and ran across the street, down the block a bit and ran into my building entrance (block of units). Running up the stairs I locked the door behind me. It was mid afternoon! The sun was out, a bright day, a wonderful day but here I am crying from the immense fear I just felt.

The checking out the window at every car sound. The listening. The tense feelings. The nightmares.

I got through that day.

The difficult thing - I still had to communicate with him in some form as I had one of his children placed in my care as she was involved in the final incident that involved us leaving. This was a requirement from a family planning meeting.

Fast forward 2 weeks.

I recall something had happened that day with his daughter so I unblocked him when he requested it via contact with her.

He started the phone call talking about another of his daughters, knowing I would have an interest in it. Then he said "I know where you live" and I started shaking and I remember I was stammering and just feeling so sick in the stomach. I was crying and he just said there is nothing to cry over. When I found out the whole story of how he found it I was shocked to say the least.

My psychologist helped me see that his explanation was full of holes. Every other instance of things that happened clearly made me realise he had been searching for me the whole time.

This should not happen.

I have been able to stay safe and no longer feel as scared. Things have improved because I am more confident in my independence and the safety plan I have in place. Only the other night I didn't hesitate to call the police after an abusive incident involving the remaining children in his care. I still look at cars that pull up. I still peek out the window.

My feeling is that I am probably lucky than others though. But I went through some traumatic times. I am still seeing my psychologist, and his daughter is seeing hers too. We both still have nightmares.

There should be no opportunity for stalking to not be considered a full charge, instant goal. Being on an AVO or DAVO means nothing. Basically a person can walk or drive on the public street, right? It's being able to prove the stalking. But prove it? To what end? Nothing gets done. They get off. They don't get reported. They don't get charged. If they do, they get off. A fine and community service? SO WHAT? It is not enough for all the anxiety attacks, the panic attacks, nightmares, self harm, suicide attempts, threats, abuse, violence.

It doesn't end.

End stalking instead.

Today.

Change the laws. Save those lives.