

## INQUIRY INTO SUPPORT PROVIDED TO VICTIMS OF CRIME

**Submission No:** 16  
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I respectfully address the Chair and Honourable Members of the Inquiry into support provided to victims of crime.

On 10<sup>th</sup> November, 2018, I took a rehearsed introductory script and an A4 sheet of paper of bullet points pertaining to the crimes committed against me as a child to my local police station. On 8<sup>th</sup> October, 2021, I was informed by the DDP prosecutor that they had secured convictions on two of four charges subsequently brought. To describe the years between as a nightmare is no exaggeration. The strange and labyrinthine course of this, a not-uncommon criminal case, was mind bendingly confusing, and so impossibly stressful that it impacted the mental and physical health of both of me and my husband.

Cases of child sexual abuse are sadly not uncommon; however a guilty verdict remains depressingly rare. A guilty verdict in a fifty year old case was against all odds. As I'm sure you all know, the conviction rate for such cases and sexual assault in general, is unforgivably low. This stands as testimony to the professionalism of the investigative officer and the prosecutor among others. I will forever be grateful to them but I also feel a kind of 'survivor guilt' knowing how many other victims have never received even a portion of justice granted to me. So many victims never get past the front desk of the local police station. My gratitude will always be tainted with grief for others.

On my very first encounter with police, I was aware that I was being received as someone bearing a useful degree of personal privilege - as a cis-woman and white, educated and well-spoken, middle-class and married, grey-haired woman. Additionally, since the case was historical, I had the luxury to prepare ahead of time, to rationally discuss the particulars of my complaint, even if those particulars were occasionally interrupted by controlled emotion. Also in our favour, my husband and I were able to call on independent sources of support both social and professional, and when necessary we were able to advocate for ourselves readily. These are all factors that contributed favourably both to our reception and successful negotiation of an otherwise baffling system. Only a few victims of such crimes enjoy such privilege.

Another factor in the success of my complaint was sheer dumb luck. The investigating officer who handled my complaint was terrific. She happened to be on duty on the day I happened to visit the local police station. She believed me and was supportive in a way that many victims never experience because not all police officers are equipped or as aware as she happened to be. Luckily for me, QPS service requirements allowed her to conclude the investigation – again such continuity is never guaranteed. Also the assignment of the prosecutor was a matter of chance. In the months I had contact with the staff of the DPP, it was clear that there was a rapid turnover of staff at all levels. That lack of continuity makes it difficult for the department to function smoothly and undermines the confidence of those relying on them at an impossibly difficult time. But I was again lucky in that the prosecutor assigned to my case that week was efficient and communicated clearly and got the job done. Again, not always the experience shared by all victims.

This brings me to the crux of my submission. In a society such as ours, justice should never depend on personal privilege. It should never be something gifted only to those who have the resources to navigate this labyrinth and the strength to endure it. Nor should the function of the justice system be reduced to a game of chance, spin the wheel and see if it's your lucky day.

Now a year and a half since the trial, it strikes me that one thing that would have improved my experience is a liaison officer - a single point of contact not QPS, not DPP but well versed in the processes of each. Such a liaison officer would be available to explain the processes of various services, to interpret the inevitable jargon, able to follow up where necessary and to ensure access to available support resources in a timely manner.

I thank the Chair and Honourable Members of the Inquiry into support provided to victims of crime for their time.