

Context

The insight component of [Insight Exchange](#) shares a person's lived experience of violence, highlighting a person's responses and resistance to violence and where 'social responses' were helpful, unhelpful or harmful. This reveals the roles that individuals, organisations and communities play in people's experience of violence and abuse. The following text is from a person with lived experience of violence. It shares some of their insights and reflections.

“Dear Australian Police Officers”

My name is XXXX. Not like that's relevant. But today I write to you, as I've heard you wanted to hear from young women on how to handle sexual assault cases and abuse better?

First off, I want to thank all police officers as a whole, for always striving to better the community, and basically being real life super heroes. I secretly aspire to be like you all one day.

There's no easy way to explain this. I'll stick to the facts. Two years ago, I was 14 and I had been sexually assaulted. Two days later I found myself getting tested at a hospital, with police officers attempting to explain to my parents of what had occurred. I get it's not an easy job. But I wish an officer had stayed by my side, instead of leaving me in a room with my parents.

I wish an officer had asked me if I wanted to face my parents. Not all adolescents go to family for comfort. I wish I had a choice. As I was still struggling to process on what was happening. As I was stuck in that empty room with my parents, I began to get blamed on for the incident. Imagine getting lectured and blamed by your parents, two days after being raped, in a hospital, with police officers standing by the closed doors. That night it felt as if all control had slipped through my hands, I felt like I had no privacy, I felt that I had to comply with whatever was said, or even suggested. Understand I was never the one who alerted authorities about my situation.

My sister alerted the deputy at my school, at around 9am on the XX of XXX. Please someone tell me why it took almost 6 or 7 hours, for police officers to arrive to my school and take me to the hospital to get checked out.

After spending hours at the hospital, I got home super late. And I was expected to get up early to have my statement recorded. No worries. I thought.

Here's where it gets complicated. It's hard imagining and having to recall on such a traumatic event, as it's something nobody wants to think of, talk about, explain, or even go into detail with. But I get that we have to.

It's annoying having to repeat yourself when someone can't hear you. Right?

That's exactly what it felt like, no matter how many times I explained what had happened, no matter how many times I delved deeper into detail. Questions were repeated, so I had to repeat many answers. It felt as if you guys just didn't hear me, for some reason.

I felt obliged to use certain terminology. Instead of being able to say, "He put his dick in me", I was encouraged to say "he had inserted his penis into my vagina."

Then after repeating that a couple of times, I was then asked "how are you sure he put his penis in your vagina?" And as a 14 year old all I could think of was "what the actual \$#@%"

Moving along...

Once I started going back to school. Police officers were attempting to collect evidence, and they would call at quite inconvenient times, where I'd be in class. They would even call multiple times throughout the day, where I've had to walk out of class and try to explain to the teacher afterwards on why I had to pick up the phone. Kind of awkward right? They knew I was in school, but they called constantly anyways.

Apart from all the above, there are however some things you guys handled well.

I get you are very busy, but you tried your best to email me regularly to make sure I was doing okay.

You helped me find services that could also help me, like counselling services.

You took time to read and reply to my long and painful emails.

I want to specifically thank Constable XX-XX XX-XX.

When court came up, XX-XX gave me a ride there, stayed by my side the whole time, constantly tried to reassure me, saying I wasn't going to get hurt, that it wasn't possible. Before the session began, he even took me to the café across the street and got me a hot chocolate.

He sat on my left to make sure I couldn't view the offender.

After giving my victim impact statement, he commended me on my bravery during the intermission.

XX-XX tried his best to make me feel as safe and somewhat comfortable throughout the whole process.

I hope what I have written will be taken into consideration. I hope this improves your perspective as a whole.

Thank you for taking the time to read.

Sincerely

XXXX 😊

Acknowledgement and thanks

Domestic Violence Service Management would like to thank the person with lived experience of violence who has generously shared their insights for the benefit of others.

We acknowledge that no matter how accurate the representation of someone's experiences of violence and adversity, we can never fully understand all that the experiences mean to a person now or through their life. We understand that no one's life experience can ever be fully represented in language or any other form.

Handle with dignity

You have been reading an excerpt of a person's lived experience of violence and adversity. It is not simply another 'story', 'sample' or 'case study'. Whilst consent has been obtained to share this account we ask that as the custodian of this copy that you uphold the dignity of the person who shared this experience as you distribute and/or store it. Tips for handling with dignity:

- Keep the copies in an envelope distinct from paperwork and reports
- Explain the importance and value of these accounts before distributing them
- Collect any copies left behind by delegates/participants after workshops

Copyright: © DVSM 2019 www.insightexchange.net DVSM gives permission for this resource to be photocopied or reproduced provided that the source is clearly and properly acknowledged.

Disclaimer: This resource is a carefully assembled excerpt of a person's lived experience of violence. Details of this person's identity have been altered to protect their safety. Whilst great care has been taken to do no harm and to contribute to improved understanding of and responses to violence and other adversities, DVSM assumes no responsibility for how the resource is used by other parties.
