

The following insights are from a person with lived experience of domestic and family violence focused on the financial abuse they experienced.

The narrative highlights the **lived experience** of **violence and abuse** including their responses and resistance to violence, and where **social responses** were helpful, unhelpful or harmful. It has been assembled from an interview conducted by [Rosie's Place](#).

MARYAM

I was, married to Rishin for 20 years. We had four children together. My kids are so good. Rishin was well educated, but he was always very controlling. I wasn't allowed to go anywhere. I had to stay at home. I started to work about 15 years ago and that's when the problems started. Rishin started following me when I went to my workplace. He put pressure on me and started saying that I was having an affair. He started calling me names and swearing in front of the children. He was telling my eldest daughter, Chandra when she was 16 that "your mum is not going to work; your mum is going to some white man's house". Oh my God. Rishin was very abusive. There were so many times he hit and bashed me. One time he hit me so hard I had stitches on my lips. He pushed me into the wall in my bedroom. I actually went right into the wall cavity. Thank God I'm alive. I think he needs professional help. But he never wanted to go to the doctor or talk to anyone. He said, every time, that he's "all right".

When I was living with him, I was so scared. Every day, as soon as I would hear his car pull up in the driveway, I would start shaking. I was just a house worker and a servant for him. There was no respect. Sometimes Rishin would just stay at home. He wanted me to feed him and look after the house. He just wanted to live on Centrelink, even though he was so

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educated. He was a Systems Administrator. But he was capable of acting in very, very evil ways. He used to keep my money. I paid all the bills and everything. That was the biggest issue. His plan was that I go and work, I would bring the wages home and give it to him. I would pay the mortgage and all the bills. I used to pay his credit card and the HECS debt for his university degree. I also paid for the food and the children's schooling. I used to send my kids to a

private school and I paid their school fees too. I had a sense he had money and wasn't letting me know about it. He only paid for his things. He was so selfish.

Last year he thought I was having an affair. He called the police about 32 times and he was getting the kids to call the police against me. He was a very smart man. Whenever the police came around, every time he would tell the kids “if you say anything, I will kill your mum”. Even if he killed me the children would have said “no he didn't kill her”. They were terrified of him.

“If you say anything, I will kill your mum.”

One time he called the police because he punched me. He was choking my throat and he put his knee on my chest. But he called the police because I just pushed him back and he got a tiny cut on his leg. So, he rang the police against me. I think the police knew they could see things. But at that time, the police were taking his side. They didn't give a damn about whatever I said. Thank God I'm alive, it's only because of the domestic violence service that I am still here.

Last year he sold the home. He froze all the money. I was still living there. The house was in his name, but we were living as de facto. He was just about to take off. At that time, I didn't have any money or anything. I sat down with him and I said “all the lawyers are taking so much money I haven't got that much money up front”. I told him I was going to have to take him to court. What I did I was so strong. I was very independent woman. which he hated. That's the biggest problem he was facing. I was very independent woman. That's why when he left, I had nothing to worry about. I was already quite independent and self-sufficient.

I was so lucky, I found one lawyer who was really helpful. Within three days we took Rishin to court. The court has been going on since last year and the hearing is on next month. He has breached court so many times. He used to delay it. But the Judge is so angry with him. I was so hurt. He put all my interior furnishings, about forty thousand dollars' worth of things out on the street. He told the court that I took all these furnishings but he put it out on the

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street. During the interviews for court, my eldest son, Sunil said “yes he is working”. But Rishin told the court that he is not working. He's a game player. I told the court I'm so afraid of him. He has threatened me and my children so many times. He has said “I am going kill you all”. I know because I've been through the domestic violence, not the court. I've been through hell. I will never forget the pain of what I was going through.

Rishin doesn't allow my son to see me at the moment. When he sold the property, he took all my kids with him. Rishin changed their school and I haven't seen the children for eight months. I didn't see them until I took him to court. So, there's an interim order for custody for my two littlest ones Varaj and Eshani. My other two children, Sunil and Chandra are with him but they are both now over 18 and the other two are younger. Viraj is 10 years and Eshani is 14 years of age. I still haven't seen Viraj, my littlest son. When I went to pick him up from the school, he ran away from me. His father has brainwashed him. My kids all say,

"I'm so afraid of him. Oh, he's so dangerous. He is so dangerous." There were so many times he took out the chopping knife. He ran around the house with it threatening us. He is very dangerous. I stood up to him, I was very strong at that time. But he used to push me.

Just before I took Rishin to court, I started talking to some different police officers who started checking on me. One time the police rang me one time I was at work, and they said "are you okay?" I said "I'm okay". I am now classed as a "high risk person". One of the police officers rang me and she said "does he know where I live?", I said "yes". Rishin was stalking me. A neighbour of mine told me Rishin has come to my house and was standing outside the door while I was at work. My poor neighbour, she was my friend and she was looking after my kids while I was at work. When he came over to my house, my neighbour called the police. The police were standing in front of her front yard while they spoke to him. I ended up taking an ADVO out against him.

Thankfully my kids are good. Somehow my eldest kids have gone through university. My eldest daughter got a degree in Accounting and my son he is studying Law. I heard that Rishin gave \$20,000 to my daughter, \$30,000 to my son last year. So, he can bribe my kids with that much money.

My worry is that he will use my children to get to me. That's my biggest worry. For the whole of last year, I didn't know that my son, Viraj, was keeping a mobile phone in his trousers. I found out these things slowly. One weekend I was out with my youngest children. Viraj pretended he had a tummy ache and he went to the toilet for ten minutes at the train station. I didn't know he had a phone but my youngest daughter, Eshani said "mum he's got phone". So, I went and stood outside the toilet block and I could hear Viraj talking to someone. I said "Viraj, are you okay?" And he said "yes, yes, I'm okay". When he came out of the toilet he said "mum, I want to go to the park". I agreed and took Eshani and Viraj to the park. When we were sitting down, having tea at the park, my son Viraj said he wanted to check my four-wheel drive to see if it was locked or not. I didn't really understand why he wanted to do this. But then I noticed Viraj running. He was running away from the parking lot towards the street. In that fraction of a second he disappeared from the park. I rang Triple Zero. The police came and the officer said "I'm going to presume that your son is with that man. You know what, I told you three years ago that you need to leave that man".

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The police asked me if I have Viraj's mobile phone number. Luckily my daughter Eshani said "yes I have got his number". The officer rang the number Eshani gave him and guess what, Viraj was already in the police station. So, Rishin had arranged to pick up Viraj from the park and took him to the police station.

It's a game. He can murder anyone. He knows how to play games. I'm so afraid of that man. He can do anything. The police said "I'm telling you to rest and don't take so much

stress. Just let your son go home with Rishin tonight and you can take this matter to the court to sort this out, write what happened down and just go to court”.

Oh my god that man would have killed me. I went to the refuge a couple of times. Once I was at the refuge and he came to persuade me, “come home, I'll change”. I had given at least three times before. He thinks I'm silly and stupid. You know, like a doormat.

He will kill me. He is a game player. He played games with me for 20 years. He will kill me. I have told my kids that and said “don't tell anyone anything”. If he doesn't kill me, he is going to hire someone to do it. When I moved into my new place, he sent two guys around at one o'clock in the morning. These men were standing near my gate. My neighbour who is heavily pregnant saw them in the shadows. When she opened her door, they ran away. He's dangerous with money, because this is a money game. With money, he can do anything. I know, he goes crazy. He quite secretive about his money. I'm so happy that I left him and that he's gone.

“He's dangerous with money, because this is a money game. With money, he can do anything!”

I never want to see that man's face again. I say to myself; “you come near me you bastard, you come near me, just come near me! What you can do? You can't kill me. If you kill me, there will be a price to be paid. Don't you dare come near me!”

Acknowledgement and thanks

Insight Exchange would like to thank [Rosie's Place](#) for conducting these interviews and providing these transcripts to Insight Exchange to ensure the voices of lived experience are able to help inform and strengthen social, service and systemic responses to domestic and family violence.

The initiative to conduct the interviews was from an informal pro-bono collaboration by Rosie's Place, WASH House, and the Mt Druitt Family Violence Team. The narratives were provided by the individuals for the benefit of others. The narratives were obtained through interviews with Rosie's Place and assembled by the Insight Exchange team.

Insight Exchange would also like to thank the person with lived experience of domestic and family violence who has generously shared their insights for the benefit of others.

We acknowledge that despite our best efforts to assemble with a person a more accurate representation of some of their experiences of violence, we can never fully understand all that their experiences mean to them now or through their life. We understand that no one's life experience can ever be fully represented in language or any other form.

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