

Submission 86

My employer attempted to rape me on one occasion, and then did rape me on another in [REDACTED] I had just turned 20 years of age. He threatened that if I told anyone what had gone on, I would never get another job in my field in my home State. I was terrified. I did not tell anyone. Instead, I bought an airline ticket, put my car on a freight train and ran away to a small outback town. I also locked the memory of the rape away to keep myself safe and subsequently thought it was odd when I started having panic attacks. So began [REDACTED] years of chronic anxiety, depression and PTSD - without any inkling of why this might be happening to me.

Until I took up a contract to return to the same outback town in a senior management role. It was there, over a six-month period that the cracks began to appear in the wall I had so meticulously constructed for my own protection. I was clenching my teeth so hard in my sleep that my jaw was inflamed to the extent that I could barely get food into my mouth. I wet the bed - twice. Despite having been on anti-depressants for over 20 years, the doctor increased my dosage to the maximum in response to my symptoms.

On my return to my home city, I planned an overseas trip and settled back at home. I read an article about Workplace Bullying and while viewing the comments the entire memory came flooding back to me of being raped by my employer [REDACTED] years earlier. I was horrified. A couple of days later, I presented to the police. They referred my complaint to [REDACTED]

I was contacted by a detective and signed a statement on. Using information I provided to the detective, the police located two other women who were sexually assaulted by this [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The accused was arrested and charged with five counts - 1 of rape, 2 of attempted rape and 2 of serious sexual assault. The matter was passed up to the Department of Public Prosecutions. He was granted bail with the usual conditions and appeared in the Magistrates Court.

It has now been [REDACTED] months since I reported to police and [REDACTED] months since the matter first appeared in the Magistrates Court – and it is still a long way from over.

My concerns about the current court system:

- a Magistrate that may not be fully cognisant of the complexities of a sexual violence complaint (and the associated psychological and physiological impacts on the complainants) and may dismiss the matter if it does not meet the requirements of justification to proceed demanded by the State;
- there is no requirement for expediency in the courts;

- an adversarial criminal trial process;
- considerable emphasis placed on the rights of the accused;
- victim is a witness, not entitled to independent counsel;
- historical low rates of prosecution in sexual violence trials.

I have been seeing a Victims of Crime therapist for ■■■ years. I have suffered from debilitating agoraphobia (along with extreme anxiety, PTSD and clinical depression) and have been unable to leave the house without extraordinary planning and preparation. I do not have the ability to return to work, I have lost contact with my friends. This process has been, in my experience, isolating to the extreme - and with no end in sight.

I am not a "witness" - I Am Evidence. I am a Victim. I was a Target. I am the Aggrieved.

Indeed, "we can't legislate for respect". But we can legislate for the rights of victims of gender violence.

Victims must be entitled to:

- independent counsel (which the defendant has access to);
- swift justice;
- adequate justice;
- an informed judicial system.

Legislation must be amended and modified to afford the same rights to victims of sexual violence as it does to victims of Domestic and Family Violence - as a national priority.