



Melanie's Story

Melanie arrived to tell her difficult and traumatic story and began talking straightaway. She was assaulted and held by her abuser for hours one early morning in her home several years ago: she was seriously injured and feared for her life. After the assault, Melanie was targeted her attacker's friends. Even though he admitted his assault and was later jailed, there were many events around her home that were frightening.

She has moved houses and area since that time; she feels safer in her new neighbourhood and, importantly, she has security doors, something she had asked for before the attack in her previous house. The Department of Housing refused to put screen doors on Melanie's house and this is where the attacker broke in. They installed one after the attack.

Melanie's mother left money in a trust for her to use. Melanie has ongoing issues with the Trustee who controls this money. Melanie would like some money to fumigate her new house, she would like to put curtains up for privacy and she would also like a dog for security and company. When we spoke with Melanie, the Trustee was refusing to provide money for these things.

What Melanie said:

I'm under the Government Trustees which I've been under for about 20 years because I was hit by a car 20 years ago. I was run over. So I've got disabilities in my arm and leg, and I've had a brain haemorrhage, stroke too. So going through that, I finally get myself together and independent. I can live by myself, feed myself, do the housework, mow, drive a car. And then he comes along and rapes me, and I'm still doing things by myself. And the Trustees won't even let me take two, three thousand dollars out of my account when I'm allowed to. There's no rules telling me what I can spend the money on, which my mum left me, to even put curtains up in my home. So where I am now, any man can walk by and watch me in the house. Kids do. They come up to my window and squash their faces up there at nine, ten o'clock. The whole house, it's open up to everybody.

I'd like a dog, not so much as a guard dog or anything, just like a therapy dog that'd keep me company and will kind of protect me and will let me know that there's someone at the door. Or someone's out in the back

yard or something. Because my hearing is getting worse and so that I think would help me enormously. And for company too.

But the Trustees won't give me the money to do that, even though I have the money. See, I notice with them – and they don't care about the rape or anything. They couldn't care less. And if they see that you are happy and you are comfortable, they hate that. And I do want the dog, very, very much so. And I've been saying that for years.

[Simon, my support worker] gave me the letter and he said I feel this would be very good for you. In fact, he was right. Because what I like about telling you what had happened, you're not judging me. You're not saying you're blamed for this, you're blamed for that. You're saying we understand.

About the police after the home invasion Melanie said:

[The police] were good. They weren't aggressive. They said if you don't want to say much now you don't have to. They didn't rush me. And what they did say, when we finished the statement, they said if you think of anything else that you have forgotten now, let us know so we can put it in the statement, add it on.

About support after the home invasion Melanie said:

They didn't do anything after the statement. The only person I really stayed in contact with was the detective. And then he put me onto another detective who's doing the court part, because the first one wasn't speaking in the court. It was someone else that was doing it. But there was no support, there was no back up. They just wanted information, my side of the story and just be around in case they do need to call me up.

What Melanie says she would have liked:

A support person I guess to come around afterwards and sit with me for a while, let me let it all hang out. I don't know who that'd be. Maybe they'd call a nurse or someone in. But after the police dropped me off I sat up all night watching and waiting for him to walk back in, even though they told me they got him. It was like watching a movie. And I kept thinking it's going to happen again, and I couldn't sleep. So that knocked me around, being 24 hours without sleep and not eating. And then I'm there on my own. And my house is a wreck, and I disinfected everything. I disinfected the walls. I disinfected my bed, the furniture, the lounge, everything. I threw that lounge out. I ended up buying all new furniture, the lounge and everything, to get rid of him.

About the neighbourhood abuse Melanie said:

...the police...said to the Department of Housing move her because they're trying to kill her. And they took a good year mucking around moving me, and because they put me under police protection. I don't know how long for, but in the beginning I was. And they said whatever you do, don't talk about the case to anybody and when you move don't tell anyone where you are.

About the perpetrators Melanie said:

It's always the same group of people...They live around the street before my street...they've pulled many, many stunts on me...they're all friends but they've also all drug addicts too, with little kids and that. I'd just be walking up the road and they'd come out and belt the hell out of me. There was another time I walked out to my mailbox and I didn't see or hear anyone come. Next thing I know bang. I was knocked unconscious. There was another time I left my house, this was just before I got my car, and I always walked up the road to buy the newspaper. And there was a car outside my place and I thought they were visiting someone so I didn't think much of it. And I walked down the road and walked half way up and I thought something's not quite right. And I walked back down to my house. The door was unlocked, I walked in, there's two young guys there trying to take my TV. Knocked me out, there's blood all over the wall.

... Another time I was walking across, up the very top at the end of the road there's a school, a primary school, and I was walking across the crossing. The girl jumped out of the van, who only comes from the house, the street in front of me, in a white van, jumped out and went whack, whack, whack, whack. I'm unconscious on the ground. There were witnesses. They called the police and the ambulance and what woke me up was the siren. And all my left side of my arm and my leg were black as black as black as you can be. The other time is when I got my car, all the kids, I always drove home the same way. I'd drive past the school where I was bashed and then I'd turn to go right to go down their road and these kids would come on their bikes if they saw me. They'd all get in front of my car in a row to block me. This is five, ten year olds, and they wouldn't move so you're stuck. And at one time I beeped my horn and they scattered and then I slowly moved down, because it's a steep hill. And as I went down I heard this woman go aarggh, she's hit him, she's hit him.

Ten minutes later the police are down the end of the house down there, on that house in front of me, and there's another house at the end of the road, they're friends with all these drug addicts. The police are down there and the ambulance. They've made it out that I ran over a kid. No such thing occurred. There was nothing wrong with the kid, there was nothing wrong with his bike, there was no marks on my car. They were trying to create trouble. There's another time they called me a child molester. I've never touched a child or hurt a child in my life, and it's the same group of people and the police knew that wasn't true.

About feeling safe Melanie said:

Not at the moment, because if any of his so-called drug addict friends find out where I live I'm gone, I'm sure. And I did say to the police when I did move, I said what if they follow me in the truck? You know, get in their cars and follow me? He said, I don't think they will. I said but it's possible. And he said I don't think they will. And I don't think they did because nothing has happened, but then who's to say someone out where I live now knows some people that live out there. And I can't talk about the case to anyone. I've had to lie to my neighbours, because they said where did you live before? And I said oh [suburb]. And that's where I did grow up, was raised in [suburb]. And I can't keep that charade going. And I don't like lying to them.

I can't have a relationship with a man. I'd like to have a partner and things like that but I can't now because of him, because of the sexual assault. And I feel that if I met another man, if we had sex it would remind me of him, so I can't. So I find it difficult to want to go out and meet someone. I can't. I can be a friend but not a lover or anything to them. And wherever I go and whatever I do, he is there. And I can get all the compensation in the world, it's still not going to get rid of him.

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