

**COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE RESPONSES TO DOMESTIC  
AND FAMILY VIOLENCE**

*Commissions of Inquiry Act 1950  
Section 5(1)(d)*

**STATEMENT OF JOANNA MASON**

<b>Name of Witness:</b>	Joanna Mason
<b>Current address:</b>	[REDACTED]
<b>Occupation:</b>	Business owner
<b>Contact details (phone/email):</b>	[REDACTED]

I, Joanna Mason, make oath and state as follows:

1. Body of statement

**Advocacy background**

In 2015, I left a Domestic and Family Violence (DFV) situation. I had been living in this situation for approximately 5 years. At this time and in subsequent months, I reached out to the Queensland Police Service for support. The support I received was mixed. In some cases, the police officers were courteous, engaged and helpful, in other cases they were dismissive and, at times, increased the duress and risk of my situation.

I was supported by Brisbane Domestic Violence Service (BDVS), and they invited me to become a member of Resound, an advocacy group comprising of women with lived experience of DFV to undertake public speaking tasks and consultation with government and private organisations. I agreed to join because I believe that awareness is key to the prevention and reduction of DFV. I also saw an opportunity to make a difference through systemic change. This desire came, in part, as a result of my experience with the police.

**Ongoing advocacy, including speaking at the Police Academy**

Today, I am still an advocate with the Resound group. Over the last six years I have spoken at a range of events, including conferences, training sessions and fundraisers, and have consulted with several organisations to help inform their approach to DFV. This work formed the foundation of my business, which supports workplaces and communities to address DFV in a relevant and meaningful way through resources, training and communications.

As part of my role with BDVS, I have spoken at the Police Academy at Oxley to share insights with new recruits. The purpose of these speaking engagements is to give recruits the opportunity to see DFV through the lens of a victim, provide a platform for them to ask questions, deliver an overview of specialist support services such as BDVS and, potentially, challenge any preconceived stereotypes or perceptions of victims of DFV the recruits may have.

My experience of these events was very positive – they enabled recruits to get a genuine and authentic account of DFV, including the things that had worked and those that hadn't. I believe the recruits and their leaders viewed these sessions as beneficial. Unfortunately, the spread of COVID meant these sessions could no longer take place.

### **Capturing experience of DFV for the Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce**

Between June and July 2021, I was engaged by BDVS to capture the stories for 40 victim-survivors of DFV for Queensland's Women's Safety and Justice Taskforce.

I spoke to a broad range of women from different backgrounds. This included women in their late teens to those in their 60's. Most of them lived in Brisbane, but there was representation across the State. Some women had left their DFV situation three months prior to speaking to me, others had left 30 years ago. The severity and type of abuse was very mixed.

During these consultations, we spoke about their experience of DFV in relation to the judicial system and the police. Some key themes emerged as follows:

- Police not taking the matter seriously or identifying key risks
- Officers talking down to the victim and a general lack of compassion
- Misidentifying the victim/perpetrator
- Putting the victim at risk by exposing their story or details to the perpetrator
- Not following up or taking appropriate action
- Behaving inappropriately towards the victim or perpetrator
- Not understanding the DVO and court system and offering bad advice
- Being manipulated by the perpetrator
- Covering up for fellow officers who are perpetrating violence
- Not keeping victims updated on the status of their situation, which causes more duress and risk
- Police being unsympathetic towards the victim, victim shaming, behaving like they don't believe them or don't want to hear what they have to say
- A lack of understanding about the non-physical forms of DFV
- Taking too long to arrive at a DV incident or not turning up at all
- Being expected to explain your story at the front reception desk at a police station, which is embarrassing and stressful
- A big disparity in the skills and approach from each police officer and a response depends on who attends on the day

- An inconsistent approach to breaching DVO's – some officers may enforce a breach, others don't
- It is intimidating for a female victim of DFV when only male officers come to an incident
- The police do not understand DV or how to treat a victim and they need education
- A lack of consistency – having to see a different officer every time you report to the police and re-tell your story each time
- The police have a lack of power in relation to property that is damaged with withheld by a DV perpetrator
- The police not considering previous DV offences/activity.

**OATHS ACT 1867 (DECLARATION)**

I Joanna Mason do solemnly and sincerely declare that:

- (1) This written statement by me is true to the best of my knowledge and belief: and
- (2) I make this statement knowing that if it were admitted as evidence, I may be liable to prosecution for stating in it anything I know to be false.

And I make this solemn declaration conscientiously believing the same to be true and by virtue of the provisions of the *Oaths Act 1867*.



.....Signature

Taken and declared before me at 4 Lamington Avenue, Lutwyche QLD 4030 this 19th day of July 2022.

Taken By .....

Justice of the Peace / Commissioner for Declarations / Lawyer

