



Daphne's Story

Daphne had experienced abuse from her husband for many years.

Daphne, a 62-year-old woman with a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) background, has a limited support network and has been financially dependent on her husband since they married 30 years ago.

Our duty lawyer in the Domestic Violence duty law service in the Magistrates Court assisted the client to respond to a domestic violence protection order sought against her by her husband. They also referred Daphne to our Seniors Legal and Support Service for social work support, based on the assessment she had been subjected to domestic violence and was vulnerable to further abuse and control by her husband.

Daphne had experienced physical, sexual, emotional and verbal abuse from her husband for many years. This long history of abuse and violence resulted in an argument when Daphne was unable to further tolerate her husband's behaviour towards her. When he would not stop shouting at her she threw an object across the room at him.

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Daphne declined her option to apply for a domestic violence protection order against him for cultural and family reasons. Queensland Police Service attended the home at the time of the incident and applied for the protection order on the husband's behalf.

The lawyer reported that Daphne had recently separated from her husband and was in significant financial hardship as she had no income of her own. She was at high risk of homelessness and required assistance to find affordable housing. Daphne owned an investment property with her husband. However, he had convinced her to sign documents, which she believed allowed him to make unilateral decisions about the property. Daphne feared her husband would sell the property and take the proceeds for himself.

Daphne was often tearful and distressed due to the trauma she had lived through. Daphne also felt grief about the breakdown of her marriage, felt fear of being the respondent of her husband's domestic violence order application, and suffered stress of having to manage alone.

Legal action

- Our duty lawyer provided assistance with the domestic violence application when our client attended court.
- Our duty lawyer was also the Seniors Legal and Support Service lawyer allocated to follow through with this client.
- The lawyer provided advice and assistance regarding:
 1. Family law
 2. Property settlement matters
 3. The benefits and implications if the client applied for a domestic violence order herself

Social work action

- Provided information and counselling to assist the client better, understand what the range of types of abuse are that she had experienced, and how they were affecting her psychological wellbeing. The client then disclosed at Court that she had been sexually assaulted repeatedly by her husband. She previously believed, and was told by her husband, that the sexual abuse she experienced from him was normal and acceptable in a marriage.
- Counselling in regard to the domestic violence, grief and loss (both over the phone and face-to-face).
- Referrals for 24/7 domestic violence support services.
- Referrals for ongoing counselling to address the separation and trauma issues that were likely to arise in the medium- and long-term.
- Help to connect Daphne with housing services and supports which led to the client securing a rental unit in a community housing rental scheme which also provided social support
- Help to learn financial management skills and adjust to independent living.
- Support at court for the domestic violence matter.
- Help to secure income support through Centrelink.
- Warm referral to Basic Rights Queensland for help with a Disability Support Pension as the client is unable to work due to long-term work-related injuries.
- Counselling regarding future planning.