



TRANSCRIPT OF
RECORDING Anonymous 1110

TRUTH TELLER SUBMISSION

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INTERVIEWER: Would you like to introduce yourself and your mob?

5 **TRUTH TELLER:** I'm a Gunditjmara woman from Portland. Victoria. Sorry. It's hard to talk when you know you're being recorded, isn't it?

INTERVIEWER: Just forget they're there.

10 **TRUTH TELLER:** Yeah. Sorry. So, with my story, it's a bit of a long one. So, it started last year, me and my partner had separated. He was an alcoholic and stuff like that, and I just couldn't cope anymore. And so he moved up to his mother's and stuff, and the communication between us both for our child wasn't the greatest. And we're
15 arguing because when he left, the power was in his name, and he had left the house, like with a rent because he didn't pay his rent. I was paying mine, but he wasn't paying his.

So anyway, there became arguments because it took me months before I could actually get on to single parent payments and stuff. And so I said - oh, sorry, that's
20 not mine. So I said to him, like, he needs to help out with my child financially. He is her father and stuff like that. He's been silly because he was ignoring me and stuff, and the gas and electricity got cut off and I couldn't do anything about it because none of it's in my name. So it became a bit of a - an issue there. And I said that he needs to be more mature and more responsible, because we do have a kid together,
25 like, you know, we need to work together.

And him and his mother decided, without my knowledge - because I wasn't saying that he had to come and buy food or anything for me, but I was just saying that his actions, he needs to change them because we do have a kid together. We do need to
30 work as like, as best as we can and amicable as possible. And so him and his mother, actually. Sorry, it's really hard to explain. So that day that I had spoken to him, he decided to come around to my house with his mum, and he was under the influence and I was just leaving. I didn't see him because if you notice, there's a paddock just over here so you can cut through there. You don't have to actually drive into the
35 street.

And his mother was just parked around the corner, and I was just leaving to go get coffee. And we were getting my child to settle down because it was about 7:30 at
40 night. And as I left, I seen her car parked and I was like, oh, okay, what's going on? So I did a U-turn and she could see that it was my car because it's still daylight and stuff, and it was just coming on dusk. And I did a U-turn and I went to go park behind her and she took off and I was like, okay, this is getting a little bit weird because last I spoke in, like, you know, to him, it was a little bit of a - bit of a
45 conflict so I was just wondering what the hell was going on. So I did follow her for a little bit in the car and I'm just like, okay. She doesn't realise it might not be me. So I pulled over and I called her. She didn't answer the phone, so I'm like, okay, I'll just go back home. It's getting sillier. It seems like someone's trying to play games.

So I came back home and as I had come home down this main street of [REDACTED] here, and then on the corner of [REDACTED], he was standing there. And I've just gotten annoyed because I just seen his mother and he just did a runner from me, and I seen him there. I'm like, okay, this is getting weird. So I pulled over and I'm like, what are you doing here,? And he was drunk and stuff, and he's like, oh, I'm here to give you like a food voucher type thing. And I'm like, I didn't ask for you to be. You have no reason to be in my area right now. You or your mother.

I do appreciate if you will turn up to my house, that you let me know before you do. And you're under the influence right now. And then he went to go to the back seat of the car where my child was. And like I said, our relationship wasn't the greatest. He was an alcoholic, and my daughter has experienced - being exposed to stuff that she probably shouldn't have. And I didn't want him breathing all over again, drunk and stuff, because it might bring up memories and I'm like no. So I jumped out of the car and I shut the door. I'm like, no, , if you wish to see our child. Because at this point in time I was organising [REDACTED] for him to go - which is a parenting -

INTERVIEWER: Yeah. Yeah.

TRUTH TELLER: Yeah. So, we can see my child and it's going to be the safe thing for her, myself and him, so we don't have to, you know. And I was doing a parenting course so I'm like, if you want to see him, you have to go down for that and make a booking. I'm sorry,. It's just how it is. And then he wouldn't stop. And the argument just got out of hand to the point that the neighbours actually came out. And yeah, they asked if I was okay. And I'm like, no, not really.

This is - I'm just broken up with him and I explained the situation and the guys was like, all right, you need to move on because he can see he is intoxicated and he was causing a scene and stuff. And he was just like - and I'm like, I'm going home, just leave me be type thing. And then from that, him and his mother went to the police station and they reported me for family violence saying I sold to him and stuff like that. I did push him away from the car. That's the only thing I did because the door and stuff, I will admit that. But I didn't go off. I didn't hit him or anything like that. I did everything I could to make my child safe.

And then I was arrest - sorry. The police came by to give me an intervention order from my former partner. On his behalf, and I contested the intervention order straight up. And then as I was going in and out of court for that, he had obviously made more statements. And his mother at the Portland police station. And then I was arrested by the police. And when I was - sorry, this gets a little bit - because I took my child away from in that - and it was only for a few hours, but that did something to me. So they came in and arrested me with prehistorical family violence, which I haven't actually heard a case like that. And so, when the police actually came, they said that my child was being removed and go on to her father. And I instantly contested it because my former partner, at this point in time, he has admitted to the [REDACTED] - oh, sorry, I shouldn't say that - to the police. That he has been an alcoholic the whole way through our relationship.

He actually admitted saying he drank at least 20 bottles of wine a day, and they still arrested me and charged me with family domestic violence. And when they came, I tried to show the police the holes in my walls, the - my TV that was broken, broken furniture. They didn't want a bar of it. They just instantly took me as a perpetrator.

5 They'd just seen a black woman and like, she's done wrong, I have a clean record. I haven't done anything, not since being a child. I haven't even had a speeding fine for like over ten years. Like, my record is clean. I don't do drugs, I don't drink, I just stay home. And so when they came in to arrest me and saying that they were taking my child, I did contest and I straight up said, where's the court order?

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Because you're putting my daughter into an arms of somebody who was known to be an alcoholic, that I've been trying to tell you that it is not safe to be around my child. And you're removing my child to be in his hands. And she said - sorry, the police said - that they cleared it through [REDACTED] - welfare. And my child was taken to go with him. And I wasn't allowed to ring anyone of my family to come and pick up my child because that's how they made me out, made me believe that's how it went, and I didn't have a choice there.

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INTERVIEWER: So, all had to happen was he had to say something -.

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TRUTH TELLER: Yeah.

TRUTH TELLER: And then that was it.

25 **TRUTH TELLER:** And they went - they really run with it. And I broke because it's not easy just having - and mind you, when I was arrested, they had six coppers. I've never done anything in my life. That was intimidating. Like to arrest me with, like, at least four cop cars. And you have a detective there too. You've got other police members. I couldn't even walk around my house like I was very emotionally overwhelmed. I was feeling intimidated by how many police officers were there. I was trying to let them know that my relationship - I wasn't the perpetrator.

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I had to sit through a lot of - it's not easy sitting there having an alcoholic as a partner. It's not always good times like. It's not easy sitting there when they're pissing and shitting themselves, and you've got to clean them up and then you're getting abused while you're cleaning them up. And then when you snap and you say something like, hey, pull up. And then they sit there and act like they never did anything. And you're like, you just said that. And then it goes through this whole - yeah. So it wasn't easy. And I tried to explain that. And he'd physically laid hands on my child and that's why I called quits with him. But no, they just arrested me.

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They yeah - it was very belittling too. And then they took me down to the police station, and I knew instantly to say, no comment. Because I'm like - I'm smart. I'm not going to sit there and give you information that you might try to use against me, because you're thinking it's a different situation to what it actually is. I'm going to go and have my day in court. And so I contested the police arresting me, and I was contesting my former partner's intervention order.

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And in the long run it went on for nearly a year. I've only just got it over and done with. But I had to - a lot of hoops I had to jump through. Because he cast me as an alcoholic - an alcoholic and a drug affected person. I had to go through [REDACTED] do a parenting course, which I paid for. I ticked off all the boxes with welfare to prove
5 that I'm not an unfit parent. Look, I do smoke marijuana, but I'm medicated for that. I have a medical certificate. Like I don't do anything I'm not supposed to do.

And so it took me a really long time and thinking that I was going to permanently lose my child because that was going through my head. Like every day I was sitting
10 there like, just wondering when they're going to come running in again and just remove her. And that - just feeling hopeless there. Yeah, it just took a lot. But in the end, I won. Because due to - they had no evidence on me and they didn't even look to do their jobs. And I did contest that to the courts - that the police were biased. They haven't done their jobs. They haven't done follow ups. There were neighbours that
15 were supposed to contact with, but they never actually did.

They just run with his word and his mum's word. And the judge eventually seen that. And then the police - Victorian police - and myself came to an agreement that I will - they will drop all charges on me as long as I didn't get the Victorian police to pay for
20 my legal bill. Because they'd royally stuffed up there. But that was a year's worth of me fighting the police because the one of the police officers. I would say that she had a vendetta against me because she was the one that was constantly pushing for it.

And yeah but thank God my lawyers and the judge seen different, seen through
25 everything. And not only that, while my partner and I are separated, his character was not the greatest. He was getting picked up for meth, carrying weapons and stuff and stealing. So that all went to - because you can pull up prior histories of somebodies - and so I pulled up that his character wasn't the greatest. You're trying to pin me as something, but here he is being all this rada-rada-rada. And so it took a
30 very long time of doing that. But yeah, sorry, I hope I narrowed it all down really quickly and -

INTERVIEWER: I can pause it -

35 **TRUTH TELLER:** - possibly as possible.

INTERVIEWER: Wanna have a quick break?

40 **TRUTH TELLER:** Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: Continue.

TRUTH TELLER: Do I have to restate my name, or -

45 **INTERVIEWER:** Do you want it to be on the same one so it reads just one after the other? Or do you want to make the two different ones?

TRUTH TELLER: We'll just have it on the same - sorry, that took me a very long time to actually think about that then.

TRUTH TELLER: Just - yeah, just say I'd like to talk about this issue.

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INTERVIEWER: Okay I would also - sorry - I would also like to talk about my brother's incidents. Because he's not here to talk about it himself. Last year, November, my brother had committed suicide. He was reported missing by my dad, and the police didn't exactly take it serious. They'd come across his vehicle and they had seen that the keys were in it. Which, when it comes to most suicide cases, the indication - they look at the car, they will lock it up straight away and do the right thing, because that's the indication of they're not far from the car.

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Most people who do commit suicide, they generally commit it not too far from their vehicle. So that's a starting point. So the normal protocol there is, the police will lock down the car and then they'll do their checks and then they'll do their search. But when it came to my brother, they just reported his vehicle being there. They didn't lock it up or anything like that. They left the keys still in the vehicle, and then they drove off. And then later on that night, my brother's vehicle was actually stolen by somebody who was just in the area - out bush, stole his vehicle and drove it everywhere.

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So when we're looking for my brother's body to try and recover him, they didn't know exactly where to start looking. So they were looking where the car was originally found and not where my brother had parked it, but where it was dumped after the people stolen it. So they were walking around that area. They were in all the wrong areas looking for my brother when they needed to be somewhere else. And due to this, we didn't actually find my brother until like 17 days later. And it turns out he was only 500m away from the car.

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If they just did their job, I could have buried my brother in dignity. I didn't have an opportunity to say my goodbyes. I didn't get to kiss him and know that - yeah, it still feels fake. Like yeah - I didn't get what I needed. That was ripped away from my family because police didn't want to follow through on their job. They didn't take it serious. And that's not fair that. I don't get to move on now. I don't have that closure with my brother. And every day since then, I always think he's still here. I always think I can just ring him up and I can't. Because I didn't do what I needed to do for myself to know that my brother was gone so I can mentally move on.

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And I don't think that's fair that his kids got that ripped away from them. His sibling got that ripped away. All because the police just seen it as another black person and didn't want to do their job. And we have to suffer for that. Sorry I don't know what else to say. Like - oh, sorry, also I - how do I word this? Sorry, I'm just trying to think about how to word this. So when my brother did pass away and I did try to get some sort of closure, I rang up the coroner's to see if I could get a picture even, or if I could see the body because I was struggling with it. And they said in my best interest

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that I was not allowed to see my brother's body due to it being so decomposed, and it was going to have a detrimental effect on me.

But I hated the fact that somebody has got to make that choice for me. I don't care if my brother was impossible to see, I don't. I would have dealt with that in my own way because that's something I personally needed and it got ripped away yet again. You already ripped away that I couldn't bury him the way I wanted. And now you're going to rip away - the last choice I have of actually knowing that it's going to be my brother. You rip that choice away just because she felt like I wasn't able to cope with it. I don't need someone telling me what I can and can't cope with. It's not up to the coroners or anybody whether I can mentally cope with that or not. It's what I actually personally needed and to have that ripped away, it's just injustice, it's unlaw - like who does that? Like to have that decided for you and then that's it. You don't get to choose nothing.

15 **INTERVIEWER:** No, you can't go backwards. No.

TRUTH TELLER: And to tell you the truth, it still caused damage. If I just had got to see - I know it would have killed me. I know. But I needed that. I needed that so I can move on. I'm in a bit of a limbo now. I can't move forward with my brother because in my head - I know this isn't the case - but what if it wasn't my brother? I know that's not the case, but that's where your head goes. Because I didn't get the closure I needed, so I'm constantly sitting back here. But was it my brother? Do they know what blackfellas actually look like? Because at the end of the day, apparently we look alike to them. Like - so in my head, I'm constantly debating. Was it my brother? Wasn't my brother. Like, is it my brother? Like so, to live in that - what would you call it - I don't know the word. Yeah. It's rough. And I'm not the only one that feels it. My siblings haven't coped with it. Like my brothers. I talk to them a lot, and they haven't. None of us has coped well because it's all got just ripped away. But yeah. Oh, sorry.

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<THE RECORDING CONCLUDED>