

Annie Woods

To Whoever it May Concern,

I am a 36 year old Foster Mum of 2 beautiful, delightful girls. They have lived with my de-facto husband of 16 years, and me, for nearly 8 years. They were 3 years old and 3 months old when we first met them and 5 years old and 2 years old when they came to live with us.

3 years ago 'our youngest' had a 45 year old man put his hand down her pants. I will expand on this later. This incident however, also triggered severe memory flashes of my own abuse at Primary School. I have since been attending counseling.

The man who 'hurt' me was in his 60's at the time and passed away in 1979. This means that although my abuse stopped, still nobody knew. It also means that today, he cannot be charged. He had his desires until the day he died, and me? I cannot even have an investigation into my trauma which, I agree, would be an unreasonable use of Police resources.

My youngest however, at 6 years old told her 'perp' to "STOP IT JOHN!!!". My husband heard this comment and told 'our youngest' to come and sit next to him. She gladly did so.

I was in the shower and as soon as I was out, she told me straight away. I took my 2 girls and a visiting girl to the visitors' home as *my* home wasn't safe at that time. My husband, who had been told, kept his cool and waited until "John" and his friend left.

This was reported to the Frankston Police 3 days later. Why the delay?? This is the most serious thing anybody could be accused of. This man "John" is the brother of one of our closest friends. A friendship of 20 years has disintegrated.

"John" was able to adjourn the court hearing for 10 months. This is a long time in the mind of a 6-7 year old that is working hard to forget!!!!

When we got to court, 'our youngest' had to cope with seeing this man for the only time since the incident. As she couldn't remember which room of our home she first told me in and what day of the week it happened, the charges against this man were withdrawn/dropped.

We would have won in that court but once he appealed, 'our youngest' would then have to testify for a second time just to lose on these technicalities. How could I put my child through that?? –just too eventually lose???

I was able to let her know how I admire her though. She took on "The Bad Man", literally, and won. He is not hurting her anymore.

She then worries about other little girls. All I can say, is that the Police know who, where and what he is, they will be able to keep an eye on him now thanks to her!

For crying out loud, when will victims have some consideration!!!! –especially our child victims!

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**A Possible Solution:**

As there can be, tragically, wrongly accused men, there must be ways to protect them also.

- The child's Video Statement SHOULD have also been their testimony.
- A transcript of the Video Statement should be sent to the Defendant's Solicitors. –Before Court
- The Defendant's Solicitors may then submit a list of questions to the Judge/Magistrate that he wishes to be asked.
- The Judge/Magistrate then questions the child in a private room. (Chambers? Set up a completely new court system?)
- The Defense Solicitor, NOT THE DEFENDANT, *must* be present AND SILENT.
- The Child *must* have a "Trusted Adult" present, even 2.
- The Prosecution *must* be present AND SILENT.
- This process can be repeated twice only. Three times is more than a child should have to tolerate.

Why would this not work? The only flaw I can see is "Do/can we trust our Judge/Magistrate?"

Barbara Holborough (Former Family Court Judge, Foster Mum, and Advocate for The Children) would be GREAT!!!!!! Even to assist with the setting up of such a system and appointing 'trusted' judge/magistrates. Mind you I have never had any direct contact with her.

Should the Judge/Magistrate also have child psychology AND knowledge of the effects of such crimes? I believe so.

There has been enough research into pedophiles to know they consistently re-offend. These men do not stop therefore we *must* protect our children. The repercussions later in life are a living hell – I am living proof of that.

We must also protect innocent, good men from false accusations. Where this happens the child has been traumatized with false stories of abuse and then co-erced or forced into lying. This child is the victim of abuse also.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Yours Sincerely,

Annie Woods