

Hi thank you for having me here - it is a great honour and privilege.

Along with Kira Robertson I am one of the founders of Her Strength. Her Story. and the Butterflies and Boots Nurturing Afternoon and Gala Ball.

I am also a Family Support Practitioner with Uniting.

HSHS is a NFP organisation run by women all with lived experience of domestic, family, sexual violence and abuse.

As both a NFP and as individuals in the sector we all work towards building a safer future for all our women and children.

We all work towards a safer Tasmania where women are not shamed or blamed;

where violence and abuse are always considered a choice;

where perpetrators are held accountable for their actions;

and where women and children impacted by DFSVA are heard with compassion and respect and supported in their healing without recrimination, shame or blame.

We all work towards a society where DFSVA is no longer accepted as a generational way of life.

We all work towards a society where women and children feel safe and empowered to tell their truth.

Safety is at the centre of everything. Society. Community. Family. Without Safety we all struggle to survive. Safety is intrinsically entwined and interconnected with the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Safety is having your human rights acknowledged and upheld with dignity, kindness and respect.

Safety is being able to assert your rights and maintain your boundaries without fear of recrimination, violence, abuse or blame or shame.

As women and children we all have basic human rights. These rights are enshrined within the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

I would like to speak to these rights from both a personal lived experience and as a worker in the FV sector.

The following examples all come from here in Tasmania...they all come from real life situations....and I am sure many of you can all relate to them.

We have the right to Physical safety - for eg we have the right to not be pinned to the ground and strangled and suffocated. We have the right to not be tied up in bed and forced to beg to be untied so we can go to the toilet before we wet ourselves.

We have the right to Emotional Safety - for eg we have the right to visit our 8 week premature baby in NICU and not have to wait until 2 am when our perpetrator is unconscious from drug use before we can go. We also have the right to come home with our baby and sleep without the act of having water thrown over us, every time we nod off to sleep, for ten nights in a row when we finally do bring our baby home from hospital. Or toddler also has the right to not be forced to throw raw eggs on us also to keep us from sleeping, every time we start to fall asleep.

We have the right to Psychological safety - for eg we have the right to not be forced to sleep with a barbed wire contraption behind our head with the implicit threat of being forced to wear it if we do not comply with orders that include sexual trafficking. We have the right for photos to not be taken of us in this situation. This was a young child's experience.

We have the right to Financial safety - for eg we have the right to not having to hand over all our bank cards and then being required to ask for money when we need to buy food for our children, pay for power in winter or buy sanitary products for ourselves

We have the right to Cultural safety - for eg we have the right to not be forced to give up our connections with our cultural community and we have the right to not be astrocised by our cultural community when that community discovers the abuse against yourself

We have the right to Social Safety – for eg we have the right to not be locked in our bedroom for days at a time so we cannot go out with our friends or see our family or spend Christmas with them

We have the right to Technological safety – for eg we have the right to not be stalked and have our constant location and activity monitored via apps 24/7

We have the right to Sexual and reproductive safety – for eg we have the right to not have holes pricked in condoms without our knowledge and we have the right to go to doctors appointments on our own to receive contraception. We have the right to not be forced to have sex where objects are used to penetrate our bodies that cause us harm.

And we all have the right to Systems Safety.....

We have the right to be able to feel safe going into a police station and know that we are going to be helped;

We have the right to know that we are going to be heard within the judicial system with compassion;

We have the right to know that we are going to be believed by systems with respect;

We have the right to a system that protects us and our children and keeps us safe from abusers and perpetrators of violence.

We have the right to know we are not going to be misidentified as the perpetrator of abuse and violence and have our children removed from our care.

Our children have the right to know that they will be safe and protected by our systems and not forced by courts to maintain a relationship with the perpetrator of abuse against their mother.

We also have the right to safety within our communities:

We have the right to not be blamed for the abuse that happened to us.

We have the right to not be shamed for the abuse that happened to us.

We have the right to safely tell our stories and be heard with respect.

Our children have the right to safety and not be weaponised against their mothers.

Our pets have the right to safety and not be used as threats in the abuse manipulation and control where they end up dead if we do not comply.

A safer future for women and children looks like a future where all our rights are upheld with compassion, respect, dignity and courage.

This will be a future where perpetrators of DFSVA are called out and where communities and systems protect and nurture women and children without question.

A safer future is a future where the shame and blame are shifted from women and children and victims of violence and abuse and accountability is fully placed with the perpetrator.

Thank you