

Aish is a former client of inTouch who is now an active member of our Inspire for Change victim-survivor advisory group. She experienced years of abuse from her husband after they were married in the winter of 2014. Within a month of marriage, she moved to Melbourne and the person who had just promised to love her for the rest of her life, became her oppressor. Her experience as a woman on a temporary visa placed her in a unique and precarious situation. Here is her story...

Content warning: family violence, mental health

I felt trapped, first on a tourist visa and then a temporary spousal visa. My husband told me that I couldn't work, get a Medicare card or go see a doctor. I didn't know there was this thing called Centrelink. I didn't know anything as I was new to the country.

He used my temporary visa as a tool to manipulate me. The outside world was portrayed to me as a dangerous place. He would say 'you can't do this, and you can't do that because if something were to happen to you, I am responsible for you because I have sponsored you'. It was degrading, having someone with that much control over your life, especially when he tells you all the time that it is only because of him that you can stay in Australia. One person holds all the cards and one person doesn't, he had a lot of power over me.

You trust that the person you have married is telling you the truth, and being honest about what you can and can't do as someone on a temporary visa. If you're new to the country and you don't have any other social connections or information, you completely rely on him and what he tells you.

I spent two years waiting to hear the outcome of my visa application and barely left the house. I didn't know what the process or timeframe was, or how long I had to wait before I could work and earn my own money so that I wasn't completely dependent on my husband. I wasn't involved in the application, my husband told me I just needed to sign the documents. Even when I questioned him about it, he made me feel like he had it under control and there was no need for me to worry. I wanted to do research online but my husband kept changing the Wi-Fi password. So without the internet and no one else to talk to, there was no way to find information.

One day my husband left the house and never returned. He left a carefully worded email – as if written by a lawyer – saying "I fear for my life and don't feel safe around you, I will be contacting immigration to inform them we are no longer a legitimate couple, I do not want to mislead the department". When I got that email, I was stripped of all of my dignity and my basic rights. Here is this person who has the power to kick me out of this country after all of the abuse I experienced, and he was doing just that.

In that moment, my life changed. I had no job, no savings and bank account, no social connections, no visa, and the next thing is that my home is going to go because he's pulled out of the lease. My whole world came crashing down.

I had a nervous breakdown. The social worker at the hospital referred me to inTouch and a local family violence service. At that point, a visa was not even on my mind, I needed to be safe. This is when someone from inTouch reached out to me. Straight away, they knew I could be deported from the country because my visa would be cancelled and they worked to protect me.

This is how it was for me. In some ways I'm thankful I did get admitted to hospital and was then referred to services that could help.

Read more about Aish's experience [here](#).

inTouch has released a position paper on women on temporary visas who are experiencing family violence, urging for eight recommendations to be implemented to improve supports and services for these vulnerable women. Read more [here](#).