

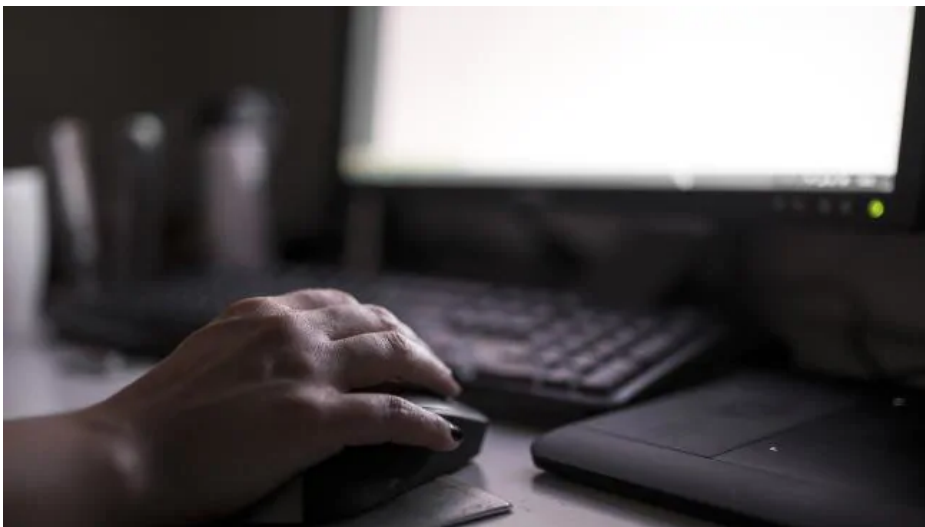
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# Narelle Fraser recounts the worst two days of her life: watching 1700 child sex abuse videos

**WARNING:** Disturbing content. Narelle Fraser's job required her to watch 1700 of the most horrific videos imaginable.

Rohan Smith

OCTOBER 19, 2015 6:56AM



Watching disturbing videos for two days straight tipped Narelle Fraser over the edge.

**WARNING:** Disturbing content.

**THE hardest two days of Narelle Fraser's life happened in 2012, on her 52nd birthday.**

At the time she was working in Bendigo, the geographical centre of Victoria but a two-hour drive from the Melbourne CBD.

Ms Fraser had joined the Child Abuse Investigative Team after stints in Melbourne with the Missing Person's Unit, the Homicide Squad and the Rape Squad. She'd seen and done it all, at least that's what she thought.

What she was asked to do for 48 hours took its toll on her, led to physical and psychological changes and forced her to quit her job because of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). She describes it as her "bottle overflowing".

"What happened was that we received one particular case where a guy was suspected of being into paedophilia," Ms Fraser told news.com.au.

The senior detective and her colleague found 1700 videos of the worst child sex abuse material imaginable. In order for the magistrate to prosecute, he required somebody to watch the videos. All of them.



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This might be the most difficult job in policing. *Source: Supplied*

"I can't just say to the judge 'We found these videos', I actually have to watch them. I have to grade them from one to five, five being the absolute worst."

For two days straight Ms Fraser watched the videos with her hand over her mouth unable to believe what she was watching.

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"I remember a senior sergeant said he'd never seen anything like it in his life. This was a guy who'd travelled the world dealing with child paedophilia cases. When he said that I knew it was really bad.

"A couple of times I was so shocked at what I was seeing. I could never describe it to anybody. I still can't tell anybody what I saw. There was sound with the videos and I was hearing children screaming in pain. I had to turn the sound off. I didn't sleep after. From that day on, I started to unravel."

Ms Fraser's experience is common. What she saw, nobody should have to see. The trauma police witness on a day-to-day basis is hard to comprehend without seeing it for yourself. Its effect on those who witness it can be devastating.

A female police officer in Victoria killed herself at work on Monday afternoon. The senior constable, in her mid 30s, was on duty at a centre helping victims of sexual assault, [according to the ABC](#). She had been a policewoman for more than 12 years.

Police Association secretary Ron Iddles said it is "always sad" when an officer dies but "far, far more tragic" when a member of the police force takes their own life.

A Police Association survey found more than three quarters of the 3500 members had trouble sleeping and eight per cent had been diagnosed with PTSD.

Channel 7's *Sunday Night* program last year reported that five times as many police officers in NSW [suicide than are killed in the line of duty](#).

Ms Fraser said after watching the videos she tried, but struggled, to get on with her life. She said for so long she prided herself on being strong but eventually had to acknowledge that she was broken.

"It's a very fine line between suppressing your emotions and hiding them from yourself," she said.

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Narelle Fraser, 55, is back at work but admits she misses her old job. *Source: Supplied*



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“I couldn’t recognise my own emotions and I got to the point where I was suppressing them so much that it all just overflowed. If you think of an empty bottle and every job that affects you being a drip of water going into the bottle, my bottle overflowed. Not everybody’s bottle overflows. When I viewed that child pornography, my bottle was almost full. That job was too much for me.”

She took a break — a self-imposed holiday — and never went back. She said her heart “skipped a beat” this week when she heard about the young female officer’s suicide.

“That woman obviously didn’t know who to turn to. She’s had to kill herself to get rid of the pain and the trauma. I never got to that point. I was lucky in a lot of ways but I understand how somebody can’t escape from those visions and those thoughts.”

These days, with the help of her colleagues and Victoria Police, Ms Fraser is employed again. She lectures at a Melbourne TAFE in investigative techniques and human rights but she misses her old job, too.

“I lost the best job in the world because I didn’t trust my instincts. That’s my message: If you’re struggling, talk to somebody. We need to educate people more that struggling to cope with seeing children abused or digging up human bodies is not something to be ashamed of.”

Victoria Police was approached for comment.

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