Risk Assessment - High

Angelina was born overseas and English is her second language. She met Barry after coming to Australia on a student visa. She was working to support herself; and studying to improve her English skills and have her foreign professional qualifications recognised. Barry had a responsible job. Neither had been married or in a long-term relationship. They soon started living together as a couple, and Angelina applied for a partner visa with Barry as her sponsor. They registered their defacto relationship and separated after nearly twelve months. There are no children.

Early on in the relationship, Barry urged Angelina to get a different job that didn’t involve night and weekend shifts so that she could be home to take care of the cooking and house, and available to go on short breaks and holidays with Barry. Angelina however enjoyed her job and was happy to work hard for good pay. Barry kept insisting until one day when Angelina was leaving for work, he hid the car keys. Eventually, he gave her the keys, but told her it was ‘the last time’ he would allow it. Barry tried, and failed, to find Angelina a full-time weekday job for higher pay, so she was forced to give up her shift work and become a ‘housewife’ to Barry. While bored and frustrated at home, she applied for countless positions without success. Barry pushed her to apply for roles that she had not yet qualified for; she resisted.

Barry took more and more control of their daily lives. He scheduled weekends away according to a strict timetable that didn’t suit Angelina; he took her on long car trips that Angelina found unpleasant, and wouldn’t allow her to listen to the music she likes; and he chose destinations that she didn’t enjoy. Angelina would not tolerate being dictated to, and they argued frequently. Often, Barry reminded her that he controlled her visa, and threatened to write to the immigration authority withdrawing his sponsorship. Barry had all of Angelina’s immigration documents and details in his possession.

In time, Angelina got another shift job that she was reasonably content with. Barry was angry because she was earning less money and he complained that her English was getting worse. Barry demanded that Angelina transfer all of her wages to him, and he would then put an amount each week in a joint account that she could access to pay for groceries and household expenses. Again, Angelina questioned these demands asserting that she was happy to share, but was also entitled to her own money to buy, for example, gifts for him. Barry never deposited enough money in the joint account, and Angelina had to regularly ask for more, which she found humiliating. Meanwhile, Barry was free to spend his wage and the balance of Angelina’s wage as he pleased.

Angelina was made responsible for cooking and household duties while also working and studying. He criticised and belittled her efforts around the house. He bought her clothes that she felt were age inappropriate and uncomfortable. Sex occurred on Barry’s terms without any regard for Angelina’s wishes. He told her she was required to sleep with him as a condition of the visa, and if she didn’t, he would report her. He also told Angelina that Australian women manipulated men so they could have children, and acquire the majority share of income and assets before divorcing them. Angelina concluded that Barry had pursued her because he believed he could take advantage of her visa dependency.

When they first met, Barry spoke to Angelina of his many friends; however, the only person they ever saw was Barry’s mother. Barry refused invitations for them to spend time with some of Angelina’s close family members who lived nearby. He monitored her phone and internet activity. Barry objected to Angelina speaking her first language. On one occasion when she was on the phone to a family member in her home country, Barry wielded a knife demanding that she end the conversation and cook dinner. Angelina was aware that Barry also kept rifles at home.

Angelina was becoming increasingly isolated, demeaned and depressed by Barry’s abuse. She started working more to get away from him. Barry then set up a whiteboard in the kitchen recording her rosters; he would ring and text her repeatedly at work demanding to know her shift times. Angelina says she felt like a slave: working long hours, being constantly monitored, and relinquishing her wages.

The situation became intolerable for Angelina and she left to stay with a friend. A family member encouraged her to get some advice from the support service at the local Magistrates’ Court. She was referred to other services that helped her with her visa application and recommended she apply for a protection order. She also started seeing a psychologist as her emotional health and confidence had deteriorated markedly.

After separation, Barry went to Angelina’s workplace and spoke with her employer more than once, embarrassing Angelina. He followed her; and Angelina believes he broke into her relatives’ home and stole goods. Barry went to Angelina’s home and took photos of her and the car licence plate. It was at that point that she rang the police, and then proceeded to obtain a temporary protection order. Police advised her that Barry had tried to avoid service. On the hearing date she felt pressured to accept a two-year undertaking for Barry to be of good behaviour towards her. Barry’s lawyer told her it would be sufficient, and that a protection order wasn’t necessary. She therefore offered an undertaking and Barry’s lawyer agreed to it on behalf of Barry on the basis that she provide a reciprocal undertaking. Angelina felt humiliated by this tactic; she refused to provide the undertaking and insisted that the matter be heard. Barry gave the undertaking and the matter was dismissed. She felt the Magistrate was understanding of her circumstances and could see that Barry was an untruthful opportunist.

Barry has made no contact with Angelina since the court date. Angelina left the relationship with only her clothes and personal possessions. She is entitled to be reimbursed the wages she earned and to retrieve furniture she purchased, however she would rather forgo her rights than have any further involvement with Barry. Angelina is on medication to cope with the depression she has suffered as a consequence of Barry’s abuse. She is trying hard to re-establish her family and social networks, and to complete her studies.