



Luke's father, Greg Anderson (with Luke in 2002), "always needed to have his own way," said Rosie.

Losing LUKE

In a grim warning, Rosie Batty recalls the moments leading to her son's death

On a leafy sportsground in Melbourne's outer-southern suburb of Tyabb on Feb. 12, Rosie Batty, 52, was waiting for her boy, Luke, 11, to finish cricket practice with his dad, when she heard an "anguished" groan. Rushing closer to the cricket nets, she came upon the unthinkable. In front of horrified onlookers, many of them children on their way home from cricket practice, Greg Anderson, 54, had bashed his son to death with a cricket bat, according to witnesses. Anderson, who had a history of untreated mental illness and was arrested last year for viewing pornography in a public library, was later shot by police as he wielded a knife; he died the next day in hospital. Now, as a warning to other parents, Rosie, who hails from England and lives in Tyabb, shares with WHO's Louise Talbot the history of abuse she suffered in the years-long build-up to a heart-wrenching tragedy.

I met Greg in 1994 at recruiting firm Drake International. I was a recruitment consultant and we were in the sales team together. He was attractive. He had a wicked sense of humour. Luke was born in 2002. This was

the time when I felt totally fulfilled, nurturing a baby, having that total bond.

Luke enjoyed his footy, he enjoyed his cricket, drama. He was effervescent, he was funny. He was intelligent.

Financially, I had to support myself because it was just Luke and me. Greg and I were not living together, but he was involved with Luke.

I was concerned about Greg's mental health. He wasn't diagnosed with a specific mental illness. Most of the time, it was verbal abuse. It was constant ways to get at me, to upset me. When the abuse became physical, I took out an apprehended violence order against him. But he would never bruise or batter me.

The past 12 months his behaviour had become so bad. He was transient, homeless. In January last year, he said: "Right now, I'd really like to kill you." I immediately thought, "I have to go to the police." They arrested him, but his actions were never enough to put him in prison.

In the end, we tried to negotiate something where he could still be a dad with Luke, like going to cricket matches, but was never alone with Luke again.

On Feb. 12, Luke and I hadn't been back long from a holiday in England. He was excited about his new school, making friends, returning to cricket, drama and scouts. He was in a really happy

place. We went that night to cricket training. His dad would always come. Greg had been bowling with the kids. When Luke asked if he could he have a few minutes more with his dad, I said, "Sure." I was chatting to another mum.

I was told he was in the cricket nets and Greg was bowling to him. I heard a loud anguished sound and ran. I saw Greg with Luke. He was kneeling beside him. I thought, "What the f--k has he done?" I thought it was a bowling accident. I thought he'd knocked him out. I screamed at a dad to get an ambulance. I couldn't stand the thought of seeing Luke hurt. I was running all over the place. I thought Greg was comforting Luke, holding him. Then I began to notice police cars.

I summoned up the courage to go over and then it became evident there was something badly wrong. I realised the police were engaging with Greg and had weapons aimed at him.

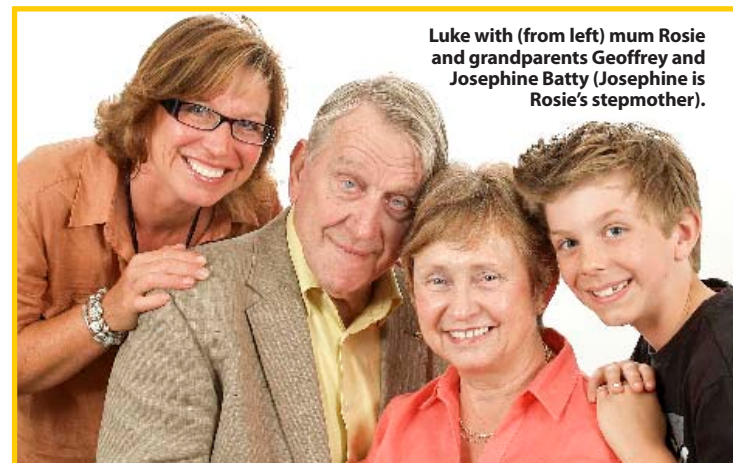
The police said it was premeditated. It was an act of total selfishness. He set it up so the police could kill him and he wanted to go into the next life and share it with Luke. Greg had always been obsessively exploring different religious denominations.

I am keen to address the issue of domestic violence, the enormity and the impact of it. Men who have an AVO taken out against them need to take a look at themselves: is this really where you thought your life would be or are you happy to keep hurting people? The sad thing is, Greg's behaviour and intimidation towards me were never bad enough for him to be sent to prison.

All my memories of Luke blur into good memories; we always had a laugh every day. Every day I told him I loved him. Every day I tried to sneak a kiss and a cuddle. ■

"He said, 'Right now, I'd really like to kill you'"

—Rosie Batty



Luke with (from left) mum Rosie and grandparents Geoffrey and Josephine Batty (Josephine is Rosie's stepmother).



Luke Batty (at age 11). "I have everything, like his first smile, all recorded in a book," says mum Rosie Batty.

SINS OF THE FATHER

"He shouldn't have taken my little boy with him," said Rosie Batty (on Feb. 14 at the makeshift memorial near where her son was killed by his father).



Luke's funeral in Tyabb on Feb. 21. "Death claimed him much too early," Luke's grandmother Josephine Batty said at the Christian service.