

I called Neal when the situation was desperate. That was undoubtedly the best call I have made in my life.

Monan Gozzett did nothing less than give us our lives back.

If Maria had not acted for us, we cannot bear to think how things might have turned out.

We feel so incredibly blessed to have had Maria as my partner's solicitor.

The first court appearance to set a trial date following my partner being told that he was going to be charged with 2 counts of historic cruelty was less than two weeks away.

We had already had 2 years and 3 months of untold stress and worry as a result of his unlawful arrest in respect of a different allegation by one of the complainants and the consequences of this for both of us financially and psychologically had already been drastic.

We were overwhelmed, bewildered and utterly terrified and outraged at the prospect of his freedom being taken away for things that he had not done and both our lives potentially being changed forever.

We had put our faith in the truth coming out. The advice we had been given was that with patience and fortitude, the nightmare would end. In the meantime we should try and get on with our lives.

That was not the case. The charges came out of the blue and the nightmare reached a new level.

We were in a situation that we felt completely powerless to deal with, our confidence and trust were crushed and it was abundantly clear that we needed expert, specialist help.

I met Maria and Neal the next day and straight away, I knew they were exactly what we needed.

Their appearance, their demeanour, their attitude, their language, everything about the way they conducted themselves, the questions they asked, the points they made, all instinctively told me I could trust them and that I had made the right choice.

They were in no doubt that we were putting both our lives in their hands and how high the stakes were for us.

There was no hesitation on my part. My partner made an appointment to see them later that day and he felt exactly the same.

How incredibly grateful and privileged we are that they were willing to take the case on.

What a difference just taking that step in itself made, what comfort that brought.

Maria said she would handle the case and she handpicked the Counsel she wanted to instruct. Again, we trusted her implicitly with that.

From that moment on, Monan Gozzett immediately mobilised and got on with things.

Neal came to court that first day and then Maria worked tirelessly poring over the paperwork and moving things on.

It is not until later once the “case” and all the disclosure comes out that you realise the incredible amount of paperwork that has to be got through and the sheer leg work and persistence that your solicitor has to put in. There are no shortcuts and Maria never stinted on any of that. She is clearly used to “getting her sleeves rolled up.”

Importantly, she also worked intelligently. She plans, she thinks, she anticipates, she “covers all bases.” She does her homework, she can “see the big picture” but also focuses on the details and what was incredibly reassuring was that both she and Counsel did this and neither she nor Counsel ever took anything for granted. They were never complacent.

Maria appreciated how difficult it is for people used to being in control of their lives, to cope with a situation where nothing is in their control and they are totally reliant on their solicitor’s skill and expertise and their years of experience and that of their barrister to, together, get the right result and expose the truth.

When you are in that position, absolutely nothing can substitute for having the right, the best people fighting your corner, who take the time to delve into the paperwork, to know the case inside out, to understand all the various factors at play and to get a sense of the whole complex scenario, who can quickly familiarise themselves with what you have been immersed in for years or months before, who have the experience to be able to “see the wood from the trees” and who you can put 100% trust and reliance on, knowing that they are hard at work on your behalf and that they know exactly what they are doing.

It was obvious how well Maria and Ms Grey QC worked together and we had the benefit throughout of their combined in depth understanding of the case. Not just so throughout the trial but at conferences and meetings before. Maria knew from long experience how to best manage the meetings to gain the most from them, the things to spend time on, the things to discount.

It is not just her legal expertise and experience you are benefiting from but her insight. She is very perceptive, a very good judge of character, intuitive and instinctive.

She thinks about and takes time to understand not just the work she is doing but the people she is dealing with, the environment she is working in and the context of what is going on.

These are not just files but people’s lives and Maria knows that.

Not only did she work seamlessly with Counsel but with her excellent team of paralegals. In our case it was Mellissa who made sure that we were kept abreast of all the various key dates and managed the administrative side of things.

Ms Grey QC assured us, as did Maria that “no stone would be left unturned” and that they would do their utmost for us. That is exactly what they did.

The lead up to and the trial itself were stressful and exhausting for us.

Maria and Ms Grey clearly put everything physically and mentally into the process. The toll on them was telling.

Maria was with us every day at court with Ms Grey, following things up as needed as the trial progressed and she worked tirelessly with Ms Grey to ensure that at each stage, not only was there a full assessment of what had transpired and a plan organised for the next stage but careful note was being kept by both of points for Ms Grey to capitalise on ad hoc and to incorporate in the draft of Ms Grey's closing speech.

We could never have coped and got through things without having Maria and Ms Grey behind us.

The absolute relief when the jury returned unanimous verdicts of not guilty on both counts is indescribable.

The debt we owe them is incalculable.

The value of what they gave us back is priceless.

We could have had no idea how things would evolve from one false allegation.

Without Maria and Ms Grey behind us, an innocent man could well have gone to prison.