


Cairns revenge porn victim speaks out in bid to warn others

Cairns woman Fiona Harper never thought revenge porn would be something that would happen to her. But she wants it to be a lesson to others. Here is her story.

Grace Mason, The Cairns Post

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 Cairns woman Fiona Harper. PICTURE: BRENDAN RADKE



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“I APOLOGISE.”

The two words were far too little too late for Fiona Harper.

The 54-year-old Cairns-based travel writer had been shaken to her core by the man she used to love, who told her repeatedly he loved her back, but then betrayed her in the worst kind of way.

It was about three weeks after they had decided to part ways that she discovered what he had done.

As a professional photographer, he had taken hundreds of pictures of her during their 18-month relationship as they sailed around stunning remote Fijian Islands; and in some of them she had posed nude.

When they broke up she asked that none be “shown anywhere they shouldn’t”.

But three days after she left him distraught at Cairns Airport in December he had joined a website called “NZ Swingers”, a site where people discuss topics such as gang bangs and public sex, and her naked body was plastered across as his profile picture.

“I was mortified, horrified that he thought it was OK to use that photo for his own use,” Ms Harper recalled.

“His justification was that it was a password-protected site, but the site has over 60,000 members. I never thought (revenge porn) was going to be in my world.

“Even though he had all those photos, I trusted him and didn’t think they would end up on that type of site.”

While she had managed to get the 57-year-old to remove the picture and delete her photos, she said the incident had shattered her trust in men.

She said she was not completely “bitter and twisted” but she wanted to use her story as a cautionary tale to others.

“I actually believe (revenge porn) happens way more than we ever know,” she said.

“I’ve had so many women messaging saying something similar happened to them.

“I am a victim but I think it’s given me an opportunity (to help others).

“A number of people have said I’m brave and courageous, but I have no shame in speaking about it. I think it needs to be spoken about.”

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She said she believed she was much more equipped to handle the fallout as she was a bit older, but could not imagine how hard it would be for teenagers and young adults.

For her, salvation has come in standing tall.

“I think we roll over too easily. It’s too easy to just be a victim,” she said.

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“It’s up to us to stand up and say it’s not right and it’s not acceptable.

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“Women have the right to have control over their body and to have it be used as a tool for personal gratification is not right.

“It’s just about respecting people.”

Ms Harper filed a complaint over the matter with the Australian Cybercrime Online Reporting Network (ACORN) and was contacted by Far North police this week, but has decided to not take the matter further and he has not been charged with any offence.

Jurisdiction would be an issue with the photo taken in Fiji, the website hosted in New Zealand and her ex-partner, a Canadian, now living in South Australia.

Either way Ms Harper just hopes he now realises how wrong his actions were.

“It doesn’t bother me that he did nude shots. If it had been in the *New York Times* or an exhibition I would have been OK with it,” she said.

“I think sometimes people need to be held to account. I really hope he has (learned something). I suspect he hasn’t been called out before.”

If you believe you have been a victim of cyber crime you can file a report with the Australian Cybercrime Online Reporting Network at acorn.gov.au or lodge a complaint with your local police.

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