A victim of crime is what I have become, not by choice, but by a murder.  Nicholas Katopodis was my baby brother, and uncle to my four children, they called him “Barnes”. My youngest 20 and my eldest 34. What we have endured as a family over the past 4 years of grief is incomprehensible!

I will never forget the day I was called to say a man has been arrested for the murder of Nicholas Katopodis, my brother. I almost collapsed at work, sheer adrenaline started to pump through my body and I’m trying to comprehend what I was just told. How do I go home to my children and explain that their uncle has been murdered. You need answers instantly, where, when, how and why, why my brother? He didn’t deserve this. He had so much to give in life and his has just been taken away. Missing for 2 years, we were searching, hoping he was still alive, and trying to go on with everyday life with no answers. I cry out loud “where are you” in despair with it all.

He loved mum and dad so much. He worked full time and was happy with his life. He would do anything for me and my kids. Nothing was a bother to him, and I knew something was terribly wrong, when he didn’t call me on my birthday in August 2011. He never missed my birthdays. I felt sad and very worried. Being a single mum he was my rock, my kids looked up to him, they respected him and he taught them a lot in life. We were all so close knit, our memories will never die, the fun times we had together.

My dad was a carer for mum but he was placed into a nursing home after he suffered a massive stroke. He passed in 2009. This brought the whole family undone. Nick gave up his full-time job, to take over mum’s care at home until she became bedridden and had to go into a nursing home. Nick visited her daily. She enjoyed his visits, and then all of a sudden he stopped coming to visit. She was suffering with cancer and was in so much pain, we kept it from her that Nick had been murdered. How do you deal with all this pain and trauma? Why did this have to happen, Nick was murdered in July 2011 and mum died in October 2011, 3 months later. A mother’s love knows when there is something wrong; she would ask everyday “where is Nicko? I would compose myself and kept telling her he’s gone on a holiday mum. She died not knowing he had been murdered. Was it the right thing to keep from her? Or do you tell her, and send her to her grave with more pain and misery, heaviness in our hearts forever.

 How do you move on from this angered pain, how do you learn to trust again. Having to go on and endure and cope, with the pressures of the comments from peers at school, work and the media. How do you keep smiling for everyone? My whole life has changed; it has come tumbling down because of a senseless crime. No one deserves this!

A part of me has died with him. I feel so helpless for the pain his poor soul had to endure. How do I deal with the visions in my mind of his last dying breaths, I simply can’t, it keeps me awake at night. It is something that will torture my mind forever, he’s gone now, his life wasted, we cannot bring him back, but if I could have one wish it would be that he never went to that house on the 27th of July 2011. Rest in peace Nick