



MAY 2021

Welcome

Greetings friends! Hard to believe it's autumn already — and what a year it's been.

We've seen mass protests around the country in support of gender equality; politicians forced to confront the toxic culture festering within our national parliament; and we've heard strong women like Brittany Higgins, Grace Tame, and many others, stand up and call out sexism where they see it.

We are living in unusual times, that's for sure, but we need to collectively harness the outrage and turn it into real action. Are you with us?

A message to journalists writing about violence

JANE GILMORE

I've been writing about the erasure of men's violence against women in the media for over a decade now. I've written articles, started the FixedIt social media campaign, studied it university and written a book about it. So, I guess by now you could almost call it an obsession.

When I first started, direct, explicit victim-blaming was common in news about men's violence against women. A 14-year-old girl was called a "drunk

teenager" in a headline about her rapist's conviction. A report on a rape trial was headlined with a claim from the defence lawyer about the victim being "flirty" at a party. The Good Guy trope was ubiquitous in reporting on men who killed their wives and children. Tracey Connelly, killed in 2013, was dehumanised to "St Kilda Prostitute" in every single headline about her murder. Women subjected to domestic and family abuse were "unfaithful" or "cheating wives" and violent men, if they were mentioned at all, were "tradies", "loving dads" or "football stars". They were also frequently defined by their emotions. Jealous husbands, lovesick boyfriend, spurned lovers or even a "horny cabbie" (seriously) committed a litany of violence against the women in their lives.

Almost all of us have felt those emotions so of course we relate to the feelings, but this empathetic coverage erased the choice those men made to use violence. Because violence is always a choice. We may be at the mercy of others when it comes to how we feel — rejection is rarely something we choose — but in that moment between feeling and action is a choice. Abusive men do not choose to walk away, cry, talk or leave. They choose violence. It is not a loss of control, because abusive men are almost never abusive in front of others, it is

controlled until no one else is there to intervene or witness the abuse.

Journalism has a responsibility here. When the one constant in reporting on men's violence against women was to erase that moment of choice, victims become responsible for inciting the feeling and therefore the violence. That perception flows through the community, into juries, parliaments, businesses and families. Flipping it, so the choice to use violence is the focus and the cause of the problem changes how we think about men's violence and therefore what we do about it.

Until recently, I have only ever once had one editor respond directly to my work on media reporting of violence. At best, editors would hastily change online headlines that attracted a strong social media pushback. Mostly, they simply ignored it. I do, however, frequently hear from the victims and survivors, or their families. They would tell me how often journalists distorted their stories, what it felt like to see news articles implying they deserved or caused what was done to them. They'd describe how eviscerating it was to be completely erased from a story about their own lives and trauma, while their abuser as excused justified or even lauded.

Late last year the ABC made a strong effort to change their reporting on

TOP: Jane Gilmore, author of *FixedIt: Violence and the Representation of Women in the Media*

men's violence against women. They did a lot of internal work on updating editorial guidelines, improving resources for reporting outside the crime and court reporting where men's violence against women usually sat, and invested in internal and external training for newsrooms. (Declaration: Jess Hill and I were commissioned to do a small portion of that training.) Two days of empathy training won't do much, but organisational change and education, mandated from the top down over a long period of time, can make a huge difference. The results at the ABC are clear. In addition to their contribution on improving public understanding of the complexity and range of abuse enacted by violent men and the structural barriers to change in police, courts and parliaments, the ABC has also changed their daily reporting of news. From my perspective, the ABC which used to feature far too often in the FixedIt campaign, has rarely put a foot wrong since they did that work.

This is the most obvious example that I know of, but I can also see significant changes across many other news publications. The biggest change I saw was after Peter Miles killed his wife, Cyndia, his daughter, Katrina, and her four children, Tay, Rylan, Arye and Kayden in Margaret River. Miles and was described by journalists as "loving grandfather" and a "good bloke", inciting a long overdue discussion about this kind of reporting, which led to an entire segment on Media Watch. Since then, the good guy/loving father/great bloke approach has pretty much vanished from reporting on men who kill women and children. As it should.

The day-to-day work of trying to make change can be a grind. I have to keep reminding myself that real change takes time, not just weeks or months, but years. Especially when what we are trying to change is violence grounded in structures built on colonialism, sexism, racism, and deliberate erasure of vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities and the LGBTIQ community. The seismic moments can feel profound, as we've seen in MeToo or even in Canberra in the last month. But as I said earlier, feelings are not actions. Feelings are ephemeral. They can wash over the structures of violence and then recede, leaving nothing in their wake but the status quo. Real change needs choice and action on the difficult work of dismantling the structures that enable men's violence, instead of tinkering around the edges with advertising campaigns and press releases. We need to do more than just hope that happens now. We need to demand it. And exact a price for failure.

Jane Gilmore was the founding editor of The King's Tribune. She has a Master of Journalism from the University of Melbourne and is now a freelance journalist and author, with a particular interest in feminism, media and data journalism.

Jane is the creator of the FixedIt campaign, which highlights victim blaming and erasure of male violence from news headlines. Her book FixedIt: Violence and the Representation of Women in the Media was published by Penguin Random House in August 2019.

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Coming August 2021: The Trap podcast, hosted by Jess Hill

Our new podcast series, **The Trap**, written and hosted by leading Australian investigative journalist and award-winning author, Jess Hill, and produced by documentary-maker Georgina Savage will be released on August 5.

The Trap is a series about love, abuse and power. Intimate, disturbing and explosive, this series reveals how domestic abuse and coercive control impacts millions of Australians, and how these same dynamics are perpetuated by the systems – and people – that govern us. This ambitious series is an exposé on how we become trapped: as victims, as perpetrators, and as a society.

The Trap's host, Jess Hill is the author of celebrated book *See What You Made Me Do: Power, Control and Domestic Abuse*, winner of the 2020 Stella Prize. Jess says, "This is the show I've dreamt of making: one that will take listeners deep into the domestic abuse crisis raging in our homes and across our systems. To truly change society, we need to understand how abuse, coercion and control play out in private and public life, and how we can play a part in changing this: both in our systems, and ourselves."

Over ten episodes, Jess will interview victim survivors and perpetrators of domestic abuse, police officers, whistle blowers, trauma specialists, counsellors, academics and historians. Through their experiences she will unpack how the abuse starts, the many forms it can take, what coercive control looks like, and what victims face when they try to seek help. The podcast will also explore how abusive behaviour, coercion and control are part of our daily lives, and will wrestle with the questions that confound us: Why does domestic abuse persist? Why do people become abusive? And what can we do to prevent it?

This project has been made possible thanks to the support of the Phyllis Connor Memorial Trust of Equity Trustees Limited, Jo Baevski and a private donor.

→ Preview episode available now! Listen and subscribe on your preferred podcast app.

Putting Bea Faust's feminist legacy on the public record

Former Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) women, Rosalind Smallwood, Lola Mathews, Lesley Vick, and Jocelyn Mitchell, approached the Trust to cover the expenses for a research biography biography of renowned feminist Beatrice (Bea) Faust AO (1939-2019). Emeritus Professor Judith Brett has agreed to write this biography, which will be published by Text Publishing. To bring this important project to life, a donation campaign has been developed cover Judith's research expenses, such as copyright permissions, travel and accommodation, printing and stationery.

It is expect that \$12,000 will cover these requirements and VWT is thrilled to be partnering with the women involved to assist with the fundraising goal.

Bea Faust changed the lives of countless women for the better, with her ground-breaking work as a feminist, political campaigner, writer, and academic. She worked for reforms that would



prevent harm to women and girls, and relished challenging the conventional beliefs and patriarchal values she saw as detrimental to women's safety and wellbeing. Bea founded WEL and co-founded the Victorian Council for Civil Liberties (now Liberty Victoria). She was a significant activist in the Abortion Law Reform Association (ALRA).

We believe Bea's life and work should be celebrated on the public record with a readable, well-illustrated book. Young Australian women need to know the feminist history of their foremothers, and to understand the hard-fought achievements which improved women's lives.

→ If you wish to make a contribution to the Bea Faust biography campaign, please contact us on (03) 9642 0422



Club Respect delivering workshops around Australia

Club Respect is a national harm prevention initiative of the Dugdale Trust for Women & Girls of which the Victorian Women's Trust is the Trustee. Club Respect heralds a movement of local sports clubs that build and maintain a culture of respect.

The first stop for any club is the Club Respect website (www.clubrespect.org.au) a free and accessible platform for everyone in sports clubs and community groups. The website holds all of our knowledge and features our *Panel of Expertise*, a portal for anyone to ask a question of our 12 sports club specialists.

For clubs wanting to draw a 'line in the sand' of their club culture and maintain an environment of respect, we now offer our signature Club Respect workshops. You can join the cohort of sports clubs, associations, leagues and local councils who are making significant cultural changes at their clubs that are creating safe, kind and fair environments.

Club Respect Workshops

Club Respect's workshop content dates back to the early 2010's with the Be the Hero! Program. Facilitated by Paul Zappa (co-founder, Club Respect), the program was aimed primarily at boys and young men at high schools, utilising group activities, discussion and interactive web resources to promote respectful relationships. Melbourne Storm joined in the program delivery, introducing their own young players to participate, who then progressed to presenting to the students themselves. The connection with the Storm led to a similar program being delivered to clubs affiliated with NRL Victoria from 2015-17. The success of these programs led to the launch of Club Respect in 2018.

Since the launch, a pilot program was delivered to rugby league clubs

in Melbourne. With funding from the Victorian Government and facilitated by Respect Australia and Mahana Culture, the pilot program helped clubs establish a framework of respect. Working closely with Pasifika (Pacific) communities, the pilot program provided education around role modelling respect and equality to help prevent family violence.

Club Respect is now delivering a workshop that takes the best elements from these past programs. It is available across the country to all codes, all clubs and at any level.

Feedback from workshop participants:

'What a wonderful experience for our club, as seasons come and go we hope to continue to build respect for all into our culture'

'The course offered enough practical and informative detail to allow our club to improve our skills without being overwhelmed. We now know where we need to focus for future improvements.'

'Thorough, welcoming, inclusive training. Gently presented, solid evidence base!'

→ Interested in a workshop presentation at your club? Send an expression of interest to Tarik Bayrakli (manager, Club Respect): hello@clubrespect.org.au

RIGHT PAGE TOP: Launch of Club Respect at AAMI Park Image Breeana Dunbar
RIGHT PAGE BOTTOM LEFT: Brian Phelan, Sophie Bliss and Peter Robinson Image Breeana Dunbar

Do you know an aspiring teen writer?

We're looking for teens to write for Rosie.org.au, our feminist youth website. It's a paid opportunity and they can write a blog on any topic they like.

→ If you know of a young person who might be interested, please send this short survey their way:



THE  AGE

'It was traumatic': The workplace taboo causing women to suffer in silence

Meet Sanduni, our New Rosie Editor

Welcome Sanduni Hewa Katupothage!

Rosie is a harm prevention initiative of the Dugdale Trust for Women & Girls, and aims to keep teenagers informed about their rights and ways they can contribute to the feminist movement.

Last month we said goodbye to editor of Rosie.org.au, Sophie Bliss. Since Sophie departed, star VWT volunteer Sanduni has been appointed to the role. We sat down with Sanduni to discuss teenhood, feminist media and the future of Rosie.

So why don't you start off by telling us a little bit about yourself?

Sure, my name is Sanduni and I really relate to that Lisa Simpson quote: "I am interested in music, science, justice, animals, shapes and feelings." If I were to add anything to that list it would include film, space, public transport, love and nature. I spend a lot of my time dancing in my room, daydreaming and trying to figure out if everything has meaning or if nothing has meaning (and if it matters at all). As you can tell, my brain is still recovering from the foggy of being in lockdown, but I think we all are.

I started volunteering at the Victorian Women's Trust (Rosie's parent organisation) almost three years ago because I wanted an outlet to push out all my raging feminist energy. During my time here I have grown from a baby feminist into a rad revolutionary (lol) and I cannot wait to see how Rosie and I grow together.

What was your favourite part of your teen years?

My teen years were full of pondering, reflection and trying to figure out who I was. I had to, unfortunately, figure out what didn't work for me to finally realise what did. Without that difficult exploration, I wouldn't be the person I am today. My teen years were also full of wonder – the best and worst kinds. I spent a lot of time on Tumblr and YouTube, trying to find my people and my place. That younger me has a very special place in my heart.

What are your favourite feminist media recommendations?

My favourite TV show is *Pose*! I also watched *She-Ra* with my sister last year and loved it – super diverse and queer. *Ackley Bridge* is incredible too – also one of my lockdown faves. A lot of my favourite feminist songs are in an article I wrote last year and most of them still stand. Some of my favourite people to follow on Instagram are: @thefatsextherapist, @iharthericka, @bobo.matjila and @soju_gang.

What advice would you give to your teenage self?

As a teenager, I was so lost, super depressed and lonely. I didn't really have any positive relationships in my life, and the worst of them all was the relationship I had with myself. You hear people telling you to 'love yourself' all

the time as if you exist in a vacuum – practically though, it is so difficult to love yourself when the world won't stop pointing out everything that is wrong with you.

So I want to tell younger me that it's not that there's anything wrong with you – it's just the world convincing you that there is. Unlearn all the BS the world has taught you and why it benefits from your insecurity. Keep on following that pure light within you that's been there from the start – your gut, heart and soul know what is up. Be you.

What do you think you are going to bring to Rosie?

Hopefully a lot of life, love and abundance – what I try to bring to everything I can. I want to be able to have more discussions about mental health, body image, race, class, sexuality, gender, ableism, and all of their intersections. I want to carry the energy of teenage girls, QTBIPOC, frogs, quokkas and the cosmos with me and through my work. I want this space to continue being a safe space for everyone, no matter who they are. I'm so excited!

→ To find out more about Rosie, visit: www.rosie.org.au

VWT News

Have you signed up for Trustworthy, our weekly news round up?

We see it as our duty to keep people informed about important gender equality news. However, as you may recall, a few months ago Facebook chose to ban trusted news sources like the *ABC*, the *Guardian Australia*, *SBS News* and more.

To ensure we are doing our part to share important news, we launched Trustworthy, a free weekly email round up of feminist news. Sending every Friday, this brief email sums up the biggest gender equality stories of the week and delivers them straight to your inbox.

While Facebook has since reversed their decision on sharing news within the platform, we think it is wise to continue to maintain communications outside of a multi-billion dollar corporation with vested interests. Just in case.

→ Sign up to Trustworthy, our free email newsletter: www.bit.ly/trustworthyVWT

Changes to the Trust team

We've been fortunate at the Victorian Women's Trust to retain talented and capable team members over the course of many years. But like everything in life, things do change, and we recently said

goodbye to two staff members: Sophie Bliss and Esther-Davies Brown.

Sophie has vacated her role as Rosie editor to head off on a trip around Australia. Esther is looking forward to a new career direction as well, taking skills from her time at VWT into her new role at Headspace. We wish them both all the best in their future adventures!

In May, longstanding strategic communications manager Ally Oliver-Perham will be taking a break to go on parental leave. At the time of printing, we are in the middle of the recruiting a strategic communications manager and communications officer. We look forward to introducing you to our newest team members very soon.

Collaboration with Circle In on menopause research

Nearly one in two working women experiencing menopause consider retiring or taking a break from work, as revealed in a new research piece by Circle In, with the support of VWT.

Circle In is a global employee experience platform that helps organisations to maintain connections with parents and caregivers on their team.

More than 700 people responded to the survey, revealing glaring statistics and an entire cohort of the workers whose

TOP LEFT: Sanduni Hewa Katupothage *Image Breeana Dunbar* TOP RIGHT: Headline from an article by Jewel Topsfield, published *The Age* on March 30

needs were not being met. The results showed that:

- 83% of respondents that have experienced menopause said their work was negatively affected.
- 73% stated stress and anxiety were higher.
- 57% said overall confidence took a hit.
- 45% said they considered retiring or taking a break from work when their menopausal symptoms were severe.

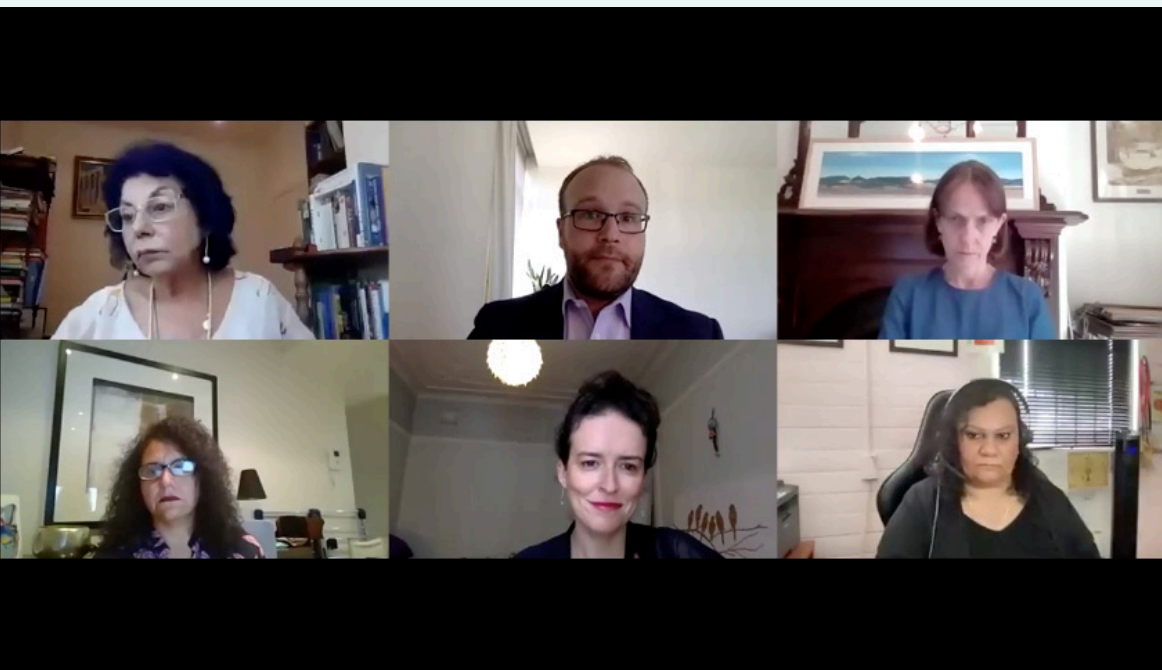
One respondent commented that: "My employer couldn't care less. In fact, I felt I had to keep it secret as menopausal women are regarded as slightly dumb and can't be trusted to work effectively."

Circle In has compiled guidelines for employers seeking to drive change in their own organisations, including advice on raising awareness, better equipping managers, and creating a framework for flexibility.

This research was also picked up by journalist Jewel Topsfield in an insightful piece, *'It was traumatic': The workplace taboo causing women to suffer in silence*, published in *The Age* on March 30.

→ Read the full report, *Driving the Change: Menopause and the Workplace*: www.bit.ly/circleinVWT

→ Check out Jewel Topsfield's article on this important workplace issue: www.bit.ly/theageVWT



VWT Events

Catch up on all our recent events

Love, Power & Control with Jess Hill, Two Part Webinar Series

On 11 and 18 February 2021, VWT screened *Love, Power and Control*, a two-part webinar series on the potential of coercive control law reform in Australia. The series was moderated by Jess Hill, journalist and author of *Stella Prize* winning book, *See What You Made Me Do: Power, Control and Domestic Abuse*.

Over the two webinars, Jess was joined by a number of experts from the UK and Australia who work on the frontlines of the domestic violence and law reform sectors. Part One of the series focused on viewpoints from the UK, where coercive control has been criminalised for several years. Part Two switched perspectives and considered what criminalising coercive control might look like in the Australian context.

What is coercive control?

Coercive control is a pattern of dominating behaviour within a relationship that intends to undermine someone's sense of autonomy and independence by isolating them from support networks, exploiting them, and regulating their everyday behaviour. It can include emotional abuse, threats, intimidation, sexual coercion, financial abuse and cyberstalking.

Unlike current conceptualisations of domestic violence in Australian law, coercive control is not characterised as individualised incidents of physical violence, but rather recognises a broader range of behaviours that operate pervasively within a relationship. As described by webinar panellist Pragna Patel, coercive control is "a continuum [of] multiple and overlapping forms of abuse".

The UK perspective: how has law reform impacted the lives of victim-survivors?

Coercive control in an intimate or family relationship was criminalised in England and Wales in 2015, and Scotland introduced a similar offence in 2019.

Members of the webinar panel suggested that it is still too early to know the total impact that these laws have had on victim-survivors, although there was resounding agreement that the laws had led to a greater awareness of coercive control within the community.

What would coercive control legislation look like in Australia?

No Australian state or territory has comprehensively criminalised coercive control. Following the killings of Queensland woman Hannah Clarke and her three children in 2020, and NSW dentist Dr Preethi Reddy in 2019, there has been a widespread

public movement for the introduction of coercive control offences across Australia. However, despite this traction in the legal reform space, some within the domestic violence sector have reservations about the ability of these proposed laws to protect victim-survivors and are concerned about their potential impact on different cultural groups. The understandable mistrust of the criminal justice system among Indigenous communities may present a large obstacle in combating coercive control through legislative reform.

Instances of coercive control interfere with numerous aspects of a victim-survivor's life, like visas, housing, financial support, childcare, and the need to access legal support. For vulnerable individuals, all needs should be accounted for when creating a sustainable framework for combating coercive control in Australia.

→ If this topic raise any issues for you, please contact:

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Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636

For more information, visit our list of support services:
www.vwt.org.au/support-services/

→ Watch both webinars:
www.bit.ly/LPCWebinarVWT



TOP LEFT: Screenshot of *Love, Power & Control* webinar with Jess Hill, featuring (top row from left) Dr Manjula O'Connor, Prof Heather Douglas, Paul McGorrrery, (bottom row from left) Tania Farha, Jess Hill, and Christine Robinson. TOP RIGHT: Mary Crooks AO, Christina Hobbs, Rana Hussain, and Prof Fiona Stanley AC; and cover of Kate Ellis' book, *Sex, Lies & Question Time*.

Thrive by Five x VWT Town Hall panel: Can gender equality be achieved without reforming early childhood education?

On Thursday 18 March, Mary Crooks AO (executive director, VWT) moderated a virtual town hall event on early education and childcare reform, hosted by the Victorian Women's Trust in partnership with Thrive by Five. Together with panellists Prof Fiona Stanley AC (child and public health researcher); Christina Hobbs (co-founder & CEO, Verve Super); and Rana Hussain (diversity and inclusion consultant); they discussed how we can move towards a cheaper, more accessible, equitable and higher quality early childhood learning system in Australia.

"At the age of 75, I am still lobbying for universal, freely accessible early childhood services as the best intervention, the best investment that any nation can do for the future of its economic and sustainable activities." – Fiona Stanley

"The pandemic exposed some really good sides to this country, but it exposed some real weaknesses. And one of them is our childcare system." – Mary Crooks

The conversation urged the government to take action and invest in better early childhood learning mechanisms in this

country. As mentioned by Christina Hobbs, an article by The Australian Institute showed that for every million dollars spent on education and childcare, 10.6 direct jobs would be created for women and 4.3 direct jobs would be created for men. Despite the clear social and economic benefits of an improved child care structures (all well established and evidenced) the Australian government is lacking the political will.

"If there is not room in the room where these decisions are being made ... if we're not willing to do that, then we need some really robust fact finding in communities. We need to go out to communities, go to them, have conversations with them and speak to them in the way they speak about these issues ... bring people and different perspectives to the table and do it collectively." – Rana Hussain

→ Watch the webinar and read the transcript: www.bit.ly/ThriveVWT

Celebrating the launch of Kate Ellis' new book *Sex, Lies & Question Time*

We were thrilled to partner with the Readings Foundation on Tuesday 6 April to support the launch of former MP Kate Ellis' new book, *Sex, Lies and Question Time*. Mary Crooks AO (executive director, VWT) moderated a virtual in conversation with Kate Ellis, discussing

her wry, candid and provocative portrait of her time in Parliament.

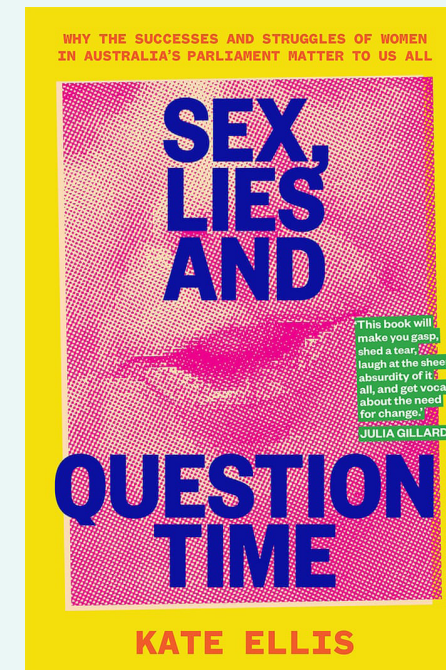
Sex, Lies and Question Time is a powerful call to demand more of our leaders and our institutions. It reminds us we need greater diversity to shape a fairer Australia, where 'women's issues' are everyone's issues.

→ *Sex, Lies and Question Time* by Kate Ellis is available now in all good book shops.

Smashing the taboo of menopause in the workplace

VWT joined forces with Circle In and the Chalice Foundation on Thursday 8 April to discuss menopause in the workplace. In this live streamed event, Mary Crooks AO (executive director, VWT) and Jane Bennett (managing director, Chalice Foundation) and moderator Jodi Rosenthal (general manager, Circle In) spoke in depth about the menopausal experience and its impact, the support women are getting/not getting vs what they need, some quick wins for employers, and how to foster a culture of openness.

→ Catch up on the live stream:
www.bit.ly/smashthetaboo



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Featuring testimonies from thousands of women and girls; explanations of menstruation and menopause; plus, new ways of thinking about menstrual wellbeing; *About Bloody Time* helps women and girls to deeply understand and trust their bodies, and giving them important tools to challenge, and disrupt, the status quo.

“It is a great book, a great resource, from the content through to the illustrations.”

– Natasha Stott Despoja (UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women Member)

“*About Bloody Time* should be on bookshelves everywhere: I only wish it had been on mine when I was younger”

– Clementine Ford

About Bloody Time: the Menstrual Revolution We Have to Have

KAREN PICKERING & JANE BENNETT

~~\$30~~ \$15

For a limited time only, we are offering 50% off full price on *About Bloody Time: the Menstrual Revolution We Have to Have*. Every copy out there in the community helps to change our menstrual culture for the better.

About Bloody Time makes the case for menstrual revolution as an essential key to unlocking gender equality. Thousands of women and girls shared their experience of menstruation and menopause. The results were clear. Shame. Stigma. Humiliation. Disgust. Negative attitudes are pervasive, entrenched, and harmful.

This book digs deep into the menstrual taboo: where it exists, how it came to be and why it's so resilient. Our culture asks women and girls to view their bodies through a prism of negativity and fear. We want to change that.

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