3CR Binary Busting Broadcast
Sunday 21 March 2021, 2.30-3pm

*Sassy’s TDoV*

**Sasja:** Trans Day of Visibility is an annual international celebration of trans pride and awareness, recognising trans and gender diverse experiences and achievements. 31st of March every year, trans people and gender diverse people all around the world will celebrate the day by sharing stories, starting conversations, and attending events.

 Hi, my name is Sasja Sydek. And I have both of my co-hosts today, Kitty Galore and Dean Lim.

**Kitty:** Woohoo! Hi, Sassy!

**Dean:** Hi.

**Kitty:** Happy Trans Day of Visibility.

**Sasja:** Thank you. Thank you so much. You guys have been a really good ally to the trans community. I would like to ask you this question. Why are you so passionate about it?

**Kitty:** Ooh, Dean, do you wanna go first? Because I can't wait.

**Dean:** For me it's always been about hearing, seeing, listening, and sharing stories and experiences of people from all around the world, and especially people who come from very different experiences to me. So growing up, I've always been interested in hearing other people's stories, and coming from – and I've never seen myself as being different from anyone else, so in a way I've come from a very privileged position of, I haven't suffered any discrimination.

**Kitty:** Being born as a cis female and identifying as a cis female, I have – there's privilege, because it's something that's automatically accepted by society, so I've never gone through that feeling of non-acceptance. You know, I've never had the same challenges that my co-host Dean and Sassy have gone through, and I'm so grateful for the fact that both Dean and Sassy have been so patient with me, teaching me gender pronouns. I can see you laughing there, Sassy! But you know, I learned pronouns on this show, on BCD, and it's because of the patience, the kindness, the love, the care on this show that I've really been able to learn how to embrace, how to celebrate, how to respect the rainbow community that's around me. And today I just want to thank every trans person, and my trans sister, Sassy Sin, for your love and your great inclusivity, that I hope more and more people who come from backgrounds like myself can soon learn, so that we can be a whole when it comes to being part of a community, and that is the human race. That's the community that we all belong to.

**Dean:** And that's what it's all about. It's about being respectful, being open to other people's experiences who may be similar, who may be different to you. That's what the whole world's about. It's about just being kind, being respectful, being open. What is the problem with that? That's the thing I don't understand.

**Sasja:** I always lead with this motto: 'Do not hit something you don't understand.' And education is the key. Why hate if you can love?

**Kitty:** Mm.

**Sasja:** Mm. I've been a trans woman for a very long time. I transitioned at a very early age, at 16 years old. Being trans is a core part of my identity. It colours both the way that I think about myself and the way that I interact with the outside world, and every person's relationship with their identity is unique. However, you can broadly describe transgender people as, with their identity, people whose gender identity is not consistent with what they were assigned at birth. But we always talk about this and try to educate the both of you gender nonconforming —

**Kitty:** And we're still learning!

**Dean:** Yes, yes.

**Kitty:** Let's confess we're still learning.

**Sasja:** So some people have a binary gender opposite to the one that was assigned at birth. Transgender is an umbrella term for trans people and also nonbinary people.

**Kitty:** Well, I've got a question for you, Sassy.

**Sasja:** Sure.

**Kitty:** What does TDoV mean to you?

**Sasja:** TDoV is about raising awareness. Of course we have equality now, but it doesn't mean that we're just gonna stop there. There's gonna be a lot more issues. You know, I'm a very proud transgender woman, but unfortunately it can be dangerous for some trans people to simply just exist as their real self, and being transgender means also you always have to look over your shoulders.

**Dean:** Do you feel like that when you're in Melbourne?

**Sasja:** I've never encountered things like that before, but reading from social media, it does give you a bit of a fear.

**Dean:** Yeah. We're very lucky in Australia. Yes, there are still crimes, and yes, things happen.

**Sasja:** Mm-hmm.

**Dean:** Generally speaking, compared to the rest of the world and certain parts of the world, it is more dangerous to be a sex worker. It's more dangerous to be a trans person. It's more dangerous to be particularly a person of colour or a woman of colour or a trans woman of colour.

**Sasja:** No, being trans can also be wonderful and liberating. Like, I will never take my gender for granted, because I had to fight for it. I also met so many wonderful, kind, caring people in the transgender community, and also – and you guys, the allies.

**Dean:** Yeah, I think that through our conversations that we always have, I think that's the way we can keep going and supporting each other.

**Sasja:** Mm.

**Dean:** Because you've also been extremely supportive of us.

**Kitty:** I'm just looking at the list of things we're hoping to talk about today, but after this short announcement, I'd really love to come back and talk about what it means to be a trans person, just for our listeners who don't usually have very much to do with the rainbow community, and I'd love to ask Sassy these perhaps difficult questions on air, so that those who have these same questions can hear what the answers are.

*[3CR announcements]*

**Dean:** Hi, everyone. You're listening to community radio station 3CR. I am so excited – I'm always excited, but I'm particularly excited about this episode, because it really shines a light on your life experiences. And Kitty, you were going to ask a question as well before the announcement, which is?

**Kitty:** Well, okay, so I'm just putting myself back in my shoes from, I don't know, three or four years ago, when I just had no idea that trans people existed. And yes, there was a time where I was just completely ignorant about this, and now that, you know, the rainbow community is more visible, the trans community is more visible, today is the Trans Day of Visibility. Sassy, I hope you can answer a couple of perhaps difficult questions, or I know questions that are perhaps difficult for the general community to ask, and that is: what makes someone trans? How do they know if they're trans or not?

**Sasja:** You don't just wake up thinking that 'I want to be a trans.' We were born to be a trans person. A lot of people are thinking trans is a sickness. It's not. God created us.

**Kitty:** This way.

**Sasja:** This way, exactly. Being a trans, I know that the society – it's gonna be a really challenging time with the society. When I was transitioning, I was a bit confused. I thought about it for a while, and I even seek help to understand myself and my body better.

**Kitty:** Because you didn't grow up with any trans people around you, did you?

**Sasja:** At that time in school, no, I don't.

**Kitty:** Yeah, when you were really young.

**Sasja:** Yeah, really, really young, I don't have any trans friends or trans influence. And at the time, we didn't even have internet yet, so —

**Kitty:** I keep forgetting because you look so much younger than me!

**Sasja:** Yeah, this is, like, mid-90s. The internet was still really new in school. At the time I was really a bit confused why I like wearing woman's clothes, I like to dress up like woman. So when I seek help at the age of 18, and my psychiatrist said, 'There's a lot of people like you,' and then I start to take hormones, and then I start to mix around with other trans woman, and then I feel a bit more comfortable with myself, and, yeah, and accept for who I am.

**Kitty:** It's so beautiful that you had a wonderful supportive psychiatrist that you could go to who could say, 'Yes, I affirm this and it's okay to be you, so go ahead and be you.'

**Sasja:** Being a trans woman and during the transition, you're gonna hurt a lot of people. At the time, I was thinking, 'Is this all worth it?' Obviously it is. I'm very close to my family. It took them a while to adjust the changes, yeah, but we're really good. Me and my mum are best friends.

**Kitty:** I'm really curious, like, were you hurting them or were they hurting you?

**Sasja:** I didn't really understand much. I just want to be me, I just want to enjoy my life.

**Kitty:** Yeah, and you were born this way, right?

**Sasja:** Yeah.

**Kitty:** But in the future, when someone gives birth to a child who's part of our rainbow community, you know, they should be embraced and loved and not changed, and therefore the child wouldn't feel like they're hurting the family just by being themselves, and obviously we're on that road there, right? And that's why we have to celebrate Trans Day of Visibility.

**Sasja:** At that time, my mum has no idea what 'transgender' means. So it was all new to them. I grew up in a Muslim family as well, so it's not that easy. And I'm the only child too, so it made it even worse. And the first grandson, too, in the family! So I'm the disappointment in them, is —

**Dean:** No, there's no disappointment. You're a beautiful granddaughter. I think it's a shock more than disappointment.

**Sasja:** Yeah.

**Kitty:** And especially in Chinese culture, you want a quote-unquote 'son' to carry on the tradition, the family name.

**Sasja:** Correct.

**Dean:** Yeah, yeah, well, an Asian culture.

**Sasja:** Asian culture, I agree.

**Dean:** Asian culture especially, yeah.

**Sasja:** I get to dig a little more out of my mum when I got a bit closer to my mum, because I actually did a documentary for European Film Festival. They followed me everywhere I go for seven months. So at the end, they interviewed my mum sitting next to me, and my mum was, like, on denial. Like, you know, 'I don't know my son gonna be this and that,' and she was, like, crying. Of course the camera's gonna love it. So we had a bit of an argument, and it ended up my mum said, 'You know what? I didn't know what direction you were gonna take. I don't understand why you want to be a woman. You're just gonna waste your life just like that.' So I ended up, when she saw me, that I've done something for myself. That's where she started to accept me for who I am, so yeah.

**Kitty:** And that's one of the things that I absolutely love about you, and that is your humbleness. You know, you are so flashy and flamboyant, but at the same time you've got so much love, you're very caring, and you're very humble despite all of your achievements – and trust me, Sassy has a lot of achievements. And, you know, one last thing before we go on our community service announcements, Sassy, we had a very candid, casual conversation quite a few weeks back about why you choose to dress flashy and flamboyant. Perhaps you can share with our audience why it is you choose to do that?

**Sasja:** I always like to look good. When I look good, I feel good. You don't know when you're gonna die! If I'm gonna die, I'm gonna look good in that dress.

**Kitty:** I loved it, because it didn't even occur to me until Sassy said that, and I'm thinking of all the times I've gone to Coles in my pyjamas.

**Dean:** Me too, uh-oh.

**Kitty:** And I think that I really admire this beautiful sense of confidence and self‑assurance that you have.

**Dean:** Mm.

**Sasja:** I've always liked the 1950s woman who always dress up all the time. I actually really wish I was born at that era. And even they sleep in, like, silk gown. I sometimes do that too, because I just want to feel good about myself.

**Dean:** Oh, wow.

**Sasja:** Yeah.

**Dean:** You're just like Audrey Hepburn and —

**Sasja:** I love it.

**Dean:** — all those beautiful movie stars.

**Sasja:** Yeah.

**Dean:** It's really about being the role model to ourselves. You know, we shouldn't be waiting for other people to tell us what to do. We shouldn't be looking towards – to others to say things or do things on our behalf. We don't live in a fascist state. We don't live in a dictatorship. We don't live in a communist state.

**Sasja:** Mm.

**Dean:** We live in a country called Australia where there is freedom of speech and freedom of expression.

*[3CR announcement]*

Welcome back to – on community radio station 3CR. I'm Dean, and Kitty and I have been chatting with Sassy for Trans Day of Visibility, which I think should be every single fricking day.

**Sasja:** So you guys have been really strong and passionate allies to the trans community. I know this for a fact. But what makes a good ally?

**Kitty:** Oh, this is a hard one, because it does come really close to the heart. I think a good ally is an ally who's able to take responsibility for any un-acknowledgement of trans in the past or any un-acknowledgment of the rainbow community. I think a good ally is one that also champions trans people and the rainbow community as well, so that means, you know, mustering up the courage to speak up and say, 'Hey, look, I was really ignorant in the past, but now I know better,' and then when it's – when we know better, we have to share what we know and step up, and step into this conservative communities and say, 'Hey look, there's more than just cis males, cis females. Oh, you don't know what cis is? Well, let me tell you, because there was a point of time when I didn't know what cis is too.'

**Dean:** Yeah, it's about getting as much information as possible. Information, education, being option to having a conversation: a kind, respectful conversation with people who may be different to you.

**Kitty:** And just learning, you know. Like, I think it's really hard for people to say, 'Oh well, maybe what I've subscribed to in terms of knowledge in the past hasn't been complete, because I haven't mixed around with different people.' And through my personal experience of mixing around with multiple trans people, including Sassy, you know, multiple people from rainbow communities such as Dean as well, like, I've learned so much, and this is an experience I would never trade for the world. It's just – it's a real privilege to be able to ask questions in a safe space, and to be able to learn about all the things I was ignorant about in the past, and there is really no shame about saying, 'You were ignorant in the past and you know better now, and you're willing to champion such a good cause,' because like we've mentioned time and time again on Behind Closed Doors, we are all people. We're all human beings.

**Sasja:** Mm-hmm. And also I think being an ally is to support and advocate for the equal treatment of the community other than themselves, so this is what we have been doing in Behind Closed Doors. We've been advocating, educate people not to hate.

**Dean:** Yeah, hate's boring.

**Sasja:** Mm.

**Dean:** It just takes up so much time and energy.

**Kitty:** And energy.

**Sasja:** It's exhausting, yeah.

**Dean:** Ugh, it's exhausting.

**Kitty:** Keeping open to learning. Meet new people.

**Sasja:** Respect pronouns.

**Kitty:** Yeah. Withhold judgment.

**Sasja:** Mm.

**Kitty:** You know, just get to know the person first. Ask them for their pronouns. Sassy, do you remember that time when you asked me for my pronouns?

**Sasja:** I do.

**Kitty:** What happened?

**Sasja:** When I asked you the pronouns and you said 'She/him'.

**Kitty:** I just didn't know what pronouns were!

**Sasja:** Well, you know what, we are always constantly learning about the community and each other as well.

**Kitty:** And that was two years ago, Sassy.

**Sasja:** It is, isn't it?

**Kitty:** Yep.

**Sasja:** Yeah.

**Dean:** Yeah.

**Kitty:** Because our second year birthday is coming up.

**Sasja:** It is!

**Dean:** Yay.

**Kitty:** Happy birthday to Behind Closed Doors, from our hearts to yours.

**Sasja:** Happy birthday to us!

**Dean:** Yes, happy birthday, Behind Closed Doors.

*[Music]*

**Sasja:** Trans Day of Visibility is about celebrating trans people and nonbinary people. Also we'd like to celebrate Trans Day of Visibility with my friends and family, and I want their voices to be heard as well. They have been a support network for me. They have been very supportive in whatever I do. They are non-judgmental people, and they play such a big part in my life. I would like to introduce Ann, Nosham, and Amirah.

So let's go back to the first time you met me. Even though we are so friendly with each other, we had this awkwardness because you guys don't want to offend me. You guys don't know what's the right pronouns that I use. So let's go back to that time when you first me, what you think.

**Ann:** Of course, when I first found out about you being a transgender woman, I had several —

**Sasja:** Okay, pause, pause. So you don't know I was a transgender?

**Hosham:** No.

**Ann:** No, we didn't know.

**Sasja:** Oh my God!

**Ann:** Yeah, so when we first met you at a friend's party, we didn't know anything about you. I don't know whether it was during the party or if it was after the party that we knew that you were a transgender woman. Then of course I had so many questions in my head, but because it was the first time we got to know you, so I didn't dare to ask anything. Yeah, so lots of questions, but didn't dare to ask, because I'm not very sure how you would take being asked questions, whether you would be offended. You know, like, 'Am I being too intrusive into your life?' So that was my first thoughts.

**Amirah:** Well, I think when we first met you, it was like, I suspected that you might be transgender, but I didn't think that it was something that I should ask.

**Sasja:** Mm-hmm.

**Amirah:** Like, I think in different ways, like, I don't look at a group of people and say, like, 'Hey, there's my five Asians, and that could be a gay guy,' or whatever. It's just kind of, like, when we wanted to get to know you, we wanted to get to know you as a person.

**Sasja:** Mm-hmm.

**Amirah:** And I think as we got to know you better, I think when there was a friendship —

**Sasja:** Yeah.

**Amirah:** — that's when we decided that, well, I needed to learn more. I needed to educate myself more, and I think the best thing we can do is to ask questions with a close friend, and by then you were a close friend, really, so we felt more comfortable asking questions. And we've learned a lot, of course.

**Sasja:** Of course! I think we learned about each other a lot, so —

**Amirah:** Like Ann said, it's like, 'Are we being intrusive if we ask you directly?' I think, like, for me I still have to kind of have a closer relationship before, you know, I could ask these kind of questions.

**Sasja:** Yeah.

**Ann**: Yeah, I mean, I was sure you definitely would have, like, a story behind everything, you know. I mean, I was sure you had a story about how you started and what are all the things you experienced, so I mean, I was curious to know your story and how it all started and how you were treated and all that.

**Sasja**: That's why we always want to learn about each other all the time, always being curious all the time, which is good, as I said. To people and kids, education is key. Okay, so what do you think of me now?

**Ann**: My idea of you as a transgender person changed. Like, initially, you know, do you remember how the questions I always kept asking you was more of a physical nature?

**Sasja**: Right.

**Ann**: Like, what made a person a person was a physical part. Was having all the physical attributes of a woman important to a transgender woman? Was it important to you —

**Sasja**: Yeah.

**Ann**: — to identify yourself as a transgender woman? So my questions initially was all about that. But then now when I think of you and when I see you, when I just think of you as my friend, as a person.

**Sasja**: Yeah.

**Ann**: As a person. Like, I don't think about what surgeries you've done or what the pills have done to you. I don't really think about – you looked like before. I just see you as who you are now as a person.

**Sasja**: Yeah.

**Ann**: So it's kind of changed.

**Amirah**: Yeah. I think for me it's like, honestly, sometimes there is unconscious bias, but I've never let these things – how do I say – like, define the friendship that we have.

**Sasja**: Mm-hmm, yeah.

**Amirah**: Like, you being transgender doesn't affect – like, I don't judge you or wouldn't judge your life. In fact, when there's greater understanding about what you went through when you were younger, and especially the struggles – like, you've been quite an advocate for the transgender or LGBTQI+, I think. You know, knowing that even makes us think about others in the community —

**Sasja**: Mm-hmm.

**Amirah**: — and anything – the struggles we have with our identity as well, it gives us a greater understanding. But like Ann said, like, you know, we don't think about it anymore. We just do it like —

**Sasja**: Yeah. What advice what you give, who wants to be friends with trans people and nonbinary people, who are afraid to, when they first met the person, what advice would you give?

**Amirah**: I think you've got to keep an open mind, and I think my friends, most people I know who are – like, they're really open to talking about their experiences, their struggles. Some of them can be very candid, but of course there are some bad incidences as well. So I think it's just good – you need to be able to feel that you can ask questions, but do it in a way that's respectful, so that – because you must understand it is their personal life. It's just like asking about, you know, like you said, like asking about sex and things like that.

**Sasja**: Yeah.

**Amirah**: You are asking personal questions, so you need to do it in a —

**Sasja**: Respectful way and be mindful.

**Amirah**: Yes. Respect their struggle and respect, you know, the way they have – everything they've had to go through to get where they are right now.

**Sasja**: Are you telling me to not be afraid of asking questions?

**Amirah**: Yes, but do it in a respectful way.

**Sasja**: And any last words? Any advice?

**Ann**: My advice is that if you want to get to know someone, or you want to get to know more about transgender people, I think there are so many avenues that you can ask questions. But if you want to just go up to someone and talk to someone, I don't think you have to be concerned about whether this person is transgender or not. I mean, you just talk to a person how you would speak to anyone that you want to get to know about. I mean, you wouldn't just straight away start asking personal questions either.

**Sasja**: Yeah.

**Ann**: So you just approach a person just like – you just approach someone just like you would any other person. But if you were really curious about specific questions, really, things to transgender people, then I think there are proper avenues which you can ask your questions as well.

**Sasja**: Yeah, I agree. I mean, I also think people should respect a person's pronouns as well, because if you don't know that person's pronouns, maybe you can just ask, because just being respectful is good enough.

**Nosham:** Treat everyone equally. That's all.

**Ann:** Yes.

**Nosham:** It doesn't matter, their gender, they are gay or binary or – really we just need to treat everyone equally. That's all. That's what I do.

*[Music]*

**Sasja:** I would like to introduce you to my mum. My mum has been a biggest fan. She's my best friend. We share everything together. She is my rock. She is the most important person in this world for me. Here is my mum.

Hi, Mum!

**Mum:** Hi.

**Sasja:** So Mummy —

**Mum:** How are you?

**Sasja:** I'm very good, thank you. How are you?

**Mum:** Fine.

**Sasja:** I would like you to tell me what you think of me as your daughter. You know, what do you feel about me? How do you think of me being a transgender woman? I want you to – maybe let's start off at the very first part where you found out that I wanted to be a woman.

**Mum:** From the beginning, I feel upset.

**Sasja:** Mm-hmm. Okay, why were you upset, and why were you disappointed?

**Mum:** Because you want to be a woman.

**Sasja:** Yeah, but it doesn't change —

**Mum:** You want to be —

**Sasja:** But it doesn't change anything, being a woman.

**Mum:** Yeah, I know.

**Sasja:** I'm still a human being. So why were you disappointed?

**Mum:** I – yeah, I very, very, very, very stress about you. I be keeping in my head all the time people talk about you, but I don't care.

**Sasja:** Mm-hmm.

**Mum:** One day I meet my friend, she come and she stay in Switzerland about 11 years. I meet her, I tell her about you. She was so shocked, but she advised me, 'Everybody also got the same problem like you. Your daughter never give you problem, you cannot be upset. You have to be happy over your daughter now.'

**Sasja:** Mm-hmm.

**Mum:** She's telling me like that. Then after that I went, I see, I see what she say is alright.

**Sasja:** Yeah, because at the end of the day, I'm not committing any crime.

**Mum:** I'm happy she advised me like that.

**Sasja:** Yeah.

**Mum:** Because she meet a lot of people.

**Sasja:** Yeah, I know, because the first time, I know how you were embarrassed with the family members, because we grew up in a family of very Muslim background as well, and you don't know how you're gonna tell the whole family that your son is turning into a woman.

*[3CR announcement]*

**Sasja:** So what do you think of me now?

**Mum:** I'm happy you can be independent for yourself.

**Sasja:** Mm-hmm.

**Mum:** You never give me problem.

**Sasja:** So you're happy to have a daughter that looks like you?

**Mum:** Of course. You already change; I have to accept it. I cannot deny what I am now.

**Sasja:** You mean what I am now?

**Mum:** Of course I'm happy.

**Sasja:** Yeah. Do you have any advice for other parents if their son or daughter who came out as a transgender person, do you have any advice for them?

**Mum:** Whatever he do or she do, you have to commit yourself, talk to them like a friend. I and you, I talk like a friend.

**Sasja:** Mm-hmm.

**Mum:** And I would talk like mother and daughter now.

**Sasja:** Well, we're best friends. So your advice is to love your child no matter what?

**Mum:** Of course.

**Sasja:** Yeah.

**Mum:** Yes.

**Sasja:** Yes. And —

**Mum:** After all, they're also your child, your own blood, whatever she be.

**Sasja:** He or she gonna be, yeah.

**Mum:** Different, yeah.

**Sasja:** Mm-hmm, yeah, so that's good advice. There's a lot more awareness now. I think at the time when I came out as a transgender woman, you don't know anything about transgender, but now I think there's a lot more support group, there's other organisation who can help every parents out there to support your child if he or she may come out as a transgender person.

**Mum:** I love a daughter or friend, okay?

**Sasja:** Thank you, Mum. Thank you for coming to my show on Trans Day of Visibility. I just want to say thank you so much for being the best mum ever. Thank you for never stop loving me, and thank you for always being there for me. I really appreciate you, and I love you so much. Thank you.

**Mum:** Bye, okay, bye.

**Sasja:** Okay. I love you!

**Mum:** I love you.

**Sasja:** I love you too.