

'Out of the Pan' Broadcast 4-July-2021

'Deanne Carson: Queers in Leadership'

Content warnings: References to #MeToo, sexual assault, intimate partner violence, financial insecurity. References to transphobia and homophobia. Brief discussion of religion in schools and conversion therapy.

[Podcast Intro] Thanks for downloading a 3CR podcast. 3CR is an independent community radio station based in Melbourne, Australia. We need your financial support to keep going. Go to [www.3CR.org.au](http://www.3CR.org.au) for more information and to donate online. Now, stay tuned for your 3CR podcast.

[Show Intro: Opening music plays. Speaker: Sally Goldner]

Panoply, panorama, panpipe, pansy? Aha! Pansexual! Knowing no boundaries of sex or gender. Sound interesting? Then join Sally on Sundays at noon for 'Out of the Pan'. All those gender questions making you think too hard? Whether it's transgender, bisexual, polyamorous, or beyond, we'll throw those questions into the pan and cook up the answers for you. So go on, push that gender envelope, only on 3CR 855AM digital and 3CR.org.au.

[Snippet of 'Let's Cook' by Mental as Anything]

[Song: 'One of a Kind (Rob Van Dam)' by Breaking Point]

[Speaker: Sally Goldner] 3CR, 855AM. 3CR Digital, 3CR.org.au, and 3CR On Demand, 'Out of the Pan' hosted by me, Sally Goldner and I use the pronouns she/her, first broadcasting live noon through one every Sunday afternoon, Australian Eastern Standard Time. 3CR broadcasts from the lands of the Kulin nation, and we pay respects to elders past, present, and emerging, acknowledge any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people tuning in by whatever means, and acknowledge that all the lands were stolen and never ceded.

Opened up today with the Breaking Point and 'One of a Kind', the theme for Rob Van Dam and in my best WWE mode R V D because we had to, and my guest who I'll introduce in a moment is one-of-a-kind and has, well had a response to the obligatory World Wrestling Entertainment reference. That was from when it was WWF and the album *Forceable Entry* from around the turn of the century.

If you want to get in touch with the show to ask me or my guest—who I will introduce in a couple of seconds—anything, there's lots of ways to do it. You can email [outofthepan855@gmail.com](mailto:outofthepan855@gmail.com); you can SMS +61 45 675 1215; you can tweet @salgoldsaidso and that's the bottom line; and you can look for posts on my page, Sally Goldner, and on 'Out of the Pan 3CR 855AM Melbourne'. And remember any opinions on the program that I express are my own and not those of any organisation with which I am associated past, present, but I can't talk about the future. And don't think there'd be

anything triggering on the show today, but if there is, Switchboard on 1800 184 527 is there. Any other numbers will mention as needed.

Now, to introduce my guest. As part of our ongoing series on queer leadership, and I'm really excited to have this person in today. To me, they are a pioneering queer leader, doing great work and have done for a long time, and it is a pleasure to welcome to the 3CR studios and also my first live guest in 16 months, which is doubly exciting, Deanne Carson. Deanne, welcome to the 3CR studios.

[DC] Hi Sal. Thanks for having me.

[SG] An absolute pleasure. And as we like to do, um, as I said, my pronouns, are she/her, I'd like to respect your gender, can I just check in with which pronouns you use if any?

[DC] She/her as well, thanks.

[SG] We respect all gender identities and expressions on this program. Leadership. How do we pack this into the remaining 53 minutes? We're going to try cause we can do anything, we're queer, we're here and no fear or something like that. The thing that I like to start with is I mean, you know, all of us have journeys in, we'll say, use the shorthand queerness, whether that covers things like gender identity expression, sexual and romantic orientation, many other things. I'd like to perhaps start by talking about your journeys of queerness, but also linking them to forms of leadership and what you learnt along the way just to get to where, you know, the point you are now on this day on the fourth of July 2021.

[DC] Fantastic. So queer, queer is certainly my identity now but like everybody I've had a real journey in this. I didn't come out until I was 36 which is, you know, I think I was labelled at the time a late-in-life lesbian like so many people who came out later. I came out as bisexual first because, you know, how could I say that I was a lesbian, if I had been married to a man for so many years? And then I took on the, took on the label for myself of lesbian. But in the years since this idea of queerness has just grown and—for me—and I've really embraced it, because I see it as political, I see it as all-encompassing. I see it as a space where we don't exclude people. So, you know, just this real inclusiveness that, you know, for me is about queerness and I think when you ask about leadership, you know, that is also the basis of the work that I do as well about being inclusive not exclusive, and looking for a space that we can bring everybody together.

[SG] Yep. So there's it—that's a great overview. I mean 36, I mean, you know, I'm not going to ask your age, unless you want to tell it.

[DC] I'm 51, Sally.

[SG] 51. So you know sort of in that era, so mental arithmetic, 1970. I mean, you, like me, grew up in a time where there was no internet. There were telegrams and it wasn't a nasty right-wing app, that sort of thing. So, you know, 36 is still a relatively long time to, you know, sort of think or try to believe, force yourself into boxes that don't work for gender, sexuality, similar. Sort of, that would have—were there challenges in that, I suppose, you know? And if so, what were they?

[DC] Well, I think absolutely there were, and like so many people when I look back on my life there were plenty of points where I could have had a realisation. But growing up, I grew up in a world that was just so heteronormative and, you know, the narratives that surrounded me didn't really allow me to imagine a different future and I think in the work—and I'm sure that we're going to talk about this—

[SG] Yep.

[DC] But the work that I do now is to, you know, so very much allow children and young people to have representations of themselves so that they can imagine their futures.

[SG] Yeah, so, so needed. I mean, that's the thing that perhaps the up to, we'll say about our generation and another 25 years beyond, and then that wacky thing called internet came in that people might be listening to us on. Sort of, you know, there was—it was hard to find things out, and now it is there. And if it can be navigated well, which of course is a challenge in itself, we might talk about that in due course. Now it does make it easy so you can get on to being your authentic self with some appropriate assistance earlier on. But the thing is, can I ask also where did you grow up geographically? Did that play a part in anything?

[DC] I grew up everywhere.

[SG] Ah.

[DC] I like to say that I was dragged up all over the world, that I wasn't brought up. Born in South Africa, lived in Israel and London and Australia, in different places in Australia, eventually settled in Melbourne with my family. Does it—does the geography have any impact? Not really. But, you know, obviously the culture that I grew up in, my family culture was just so heteronormative and particularly my father, like a lot of people, policed my gender a lot. So, I remember, you know, when I got my hair cut at 16 years of age, you know, my dad didn't speak to me for two weeks and went, 'I have a daughter, not a son' and really just drove home that I needed to have long hair. I wasn't—you know, this was a rule—I wasn't allowed to wear pants or jeans in my teenage years. So I had to perform femininity in a way that, you know, that my dad found acceptable.

[SG] Mmmm. And, well, I'm almost shuddering to ask, but did you have to wear high heels all the time? Medium heels?

[DC] [laughs] Not for my family. But I do recall my, my first corporate job, I worked in. The organise—and this makes me sound really old but, you know, this was in the 90s. The company that I worked for, the policy—the clothing policy was that the women had to wear skirt suits.

[SG] Yeah.

[DC] Pantyhose and heels.

[SG] Oh dear. Well, yeah. There's a few things that come to mind there as you, as you were talking. I last had a full-time job in the corporate sector, also in the 80s and 90s, but as my trying to be my earlier in inverted commas, 'male self', end inverted commas, and it was yes, suits and ties and even into the 80s, some of the accountants was still wearing brown pinstripe suits, which probably shouldn't say that around lunchtime. But yeah, it was like that, that was the whole thing that as a friend of mine calls it 'Money Penny Wear' and, you know, incredibly uncomfortable. And of course, there's that old saying, if high heels are so great, why don't men wear them more often, all that sort of stuff, particularly stilettos. And it's still there. I remember only a few years ago a friend of mine posted an ad on, you know, when I say she posted, she saw an ad which she reposted about, you know, a receptionist job and you had to have all that and no visible tattoos and all the rest of it. I'm just thinking, you know, which century are we in? And then I didn't even realise that they were assuming the receptionist was someone who would, we'll say in our language most likely identify as female. Why not a male or a non-binary person? So yeah, it's still there. I have to say though, also, I didn't know you'd ever worked in a corporate setting.

[DC] [laughs] Yep.

[SG] I mean, I've known you now for about for 10 or 15 years and knowing you now and knowing that I—we'll come to this, you know, I see the authentic Deanne Carson and by a long way I can't, I have to admit, I can't imagine you in a corporate setting. Maybe the Money Penny suit, but you know, I sort of—that must have been almost just as frustrating as you know, the haircut stuff.

[DC] It was—it was, I mean, it was certainly a particular time in my life. But even then, you know, I had so many questions. I worked in an industry that was predominantly female, and I had, you know, a team of 16 people that I managed. And I remember that I hired a guy and there was a lot of pressure from senior management to justify why I wasn't hiring a woman in that role.

[SG] Mmmm. Okay. So, oh god, that must have been bewildering—some of these—

[DC] Yeah.

[SG] Sound incredibly bewildering.

[DC] Yeah, sounds archaic.

[SG] Yeah. So you were in the corporate sector and what, you know, I'll ask two questions. One, what sort of things did you learn about what to do and I'll say what not to do in terms of leadership, which may sound obvious but also what—was there a catalyst in there that said, 'I've got to get out of here'?

[DC] So the catalyst for getting out was that I had babies. And I negotiated with my employer that I would do work from home in the process of returning to the workforce after having my first baby. And on the day I was due to go on mat leave, my employer said to me, 'no, sorry, we can't have you working from home because insurance policies yada yada'. Which is ridiculous to think about now, right?

[SG] Of course.

[DC] Over the last year, everyone working from home. And so you need to make a decision about whether to come back straightaway or whether to resign.

[SG] [gasps]

[DC] I know. I know. So that was the catalyst for me leaving, but obviously moving into different roles now and post sort of raising small children, it absolutely has given me spaces for reflection on what leadership can and can't be. And the bullying that occurs in the corporate sector, the way people are pushed out of roles or not given opportunities or have the information withheld from them that will allow them to grow, is something that I never ever wanted to replicate.

[SG] Not given information. Yeah, familiar theme, not given information, not communicated, unilateral decisions forced on people, all that sort of thing. Just, you know, it sounds so 180 degrees around from common sense when we use those sorts of words, yet it just seems to happen. And now it also comes across to me in big inverted commas as a very 'male/masculine' end inverted commas form of, well, I think I'll put after leadership here 'sic', s-i-c, you know it's just, it just—yet it seems to happen.

[DC] And even though it was a female-led organisation and it was a female dominated industry, it was very much replicating, you know, masculine leadership. And you know, it was very much, you know, shoulder-padded suit type of mentality.

[SG] Yeah. I want to make a note to come back to that one. So we're coming through probably, I think, now the 90s into the 2000s it's sounding like and so after you, you know, work—I'm sorry to use four letter words on air, listeners, but work is one of them, you know, we need to do it, we've got food to buy and housing to pay for, and if you're—and caffeine of various diverse forms, coffee over here, tea over on your side of the radio studio. But what did you do after that, when you were getting back to work again?

[DC] So, so Sally. That was a really interesting period. I was a stay-at-home parent for seven years. I was in a heterosexual marriage and married to a man who, you know, ensured financial security for our family. And then at the end of that marriage experienced family violence; went from a very secure financial, you know, middle class life, to then having to go back and, and study and raise children on my own and, and face financial insecurity. And coming out of study, I realised that I was almost unemployable because I'd been out of the workforce for seven years.

[SG] Yeah.

[DC] I had gone from a space of getting every single job that I ever applied for, to not even getting interviews and being a woman in my mid-30s, a white woman, an educated white woman in my mid-30s, who couldn't get a foot in the door. And that just sort of threw me back on the seat of my pants and went, you know, how are things set up that with all of my advantages, I can't even get an interview because on paper there's a gap in my resume because I've been raising children.

[SG] Yeah, so that would have been more reflection, you know, sort of, you know, and of course, you know, so overwhelmingly, you know, affects women and—though but anyone carrying, raising children, those sorts of things.

[DC] Or in caring roles, caring for family members who have a disability or, you know, for elderly parents. Like, anyone who has chosen to contribute to society in an unpaid role, you know, and then wants to get back into paid employment faces that, that sort of disadvantage.

[SG] Yep. Now, I should just mention that if any mention of family violence, including intimate partner violence is upsetting, once again the number for Switchboard, 1800 184 527, and also QLife on 1800 542 847 as well for any listeners needing those services. So, you know, there you were, you were out of a job and you had to get out of the relationship, the heterosexual marriage as well, which would have been a) traumatic and b) how did you manage to sort of cope through that time for lack of a better word? What kept you sort of going on in what must have been, you know, with two parts of your life falling down and probably where you lived as well, I would guess as well. Three big parts. Yeah, what kept you going?

[DC] That's a really good question. Obviously, my children. I was, I was the adult responsible for keeping their lives together while all of the parts of their lives were falling apart. They weren't seeing their dad so much, we had to move house, they had to move schools, we had to move away from their friends and support networks. So obviously, you know, that was a major part. But also a friend of mine separated from her husband at the same time, and we were both really—we both had dreams, you know, because everybody has a dream, we both had dreams, we both were creative, we both had, you know, particular skills and we both had small children. And I applied to go back to uni to study writing and editing, because I'd always wanted to be a writer and that was my dream. And she got a job that would allow her to work during school hours and, you

know, and it was a nice secure job and I think in that space I just went I've got a choice here: I can either choose security and—but perhaps something that is just not fulfilling—or I can chase my dream. And if I chase my dream, because I have to provide security for my family, I just actually have to make it work. And that's what I did.

[SG] I think here we are at about 23 minutes past 12, I've got my first headline quote for the day with that one. That's I mean, wow. I'm just having a huge light bulb fuzzy tingling moment hearing that. That's a bolt. You know it's a—it's, well, it's a decision you needed to make from your heart. But it also must have involved some courage and some determination and some resilience and speaks volumes about—well, that's leadership. You look deep inside yourself and we have to lead ourselves and that would have been, you know, a really important thing to do. And I think the other thing that, of course, comes out of it: connection with your friend and the family and no doubt you were able to perhaps share some, you know, child care arrangements or something of some sort, have—or no, not so much?

[DC] Not so much.

[SG] Okay. But there was at least connection and support in that way.

[DC] Yeah.

[SG] Peer support, if we can put it that way, which was something. So now we're getting in from the end of the 2000s to the 2010s which is, you know, I should have—

[DC] I feel like I'm in an episode of *This is Your Life*. Who's going to pop out, Sally?

[SG] Ah, well, some things will pop out because, I was going to say it actually, that's about the point when you were studying when we met.

[DC] Yes, that's right.

[SG] And here is a voice from your past. Well, I'm right here in the present. I should have mentioned at the start, I have or will come to where you work soon and yeah, I have recently done some paid work for you just so there's no conflict of interest. And so there you were doing creative writing and so I'm going to tie that back to your ongoing journey but also your journey in queerdom.

[DC] Yes.

[SG] What was happening now at this time, because by about this time, if I'm doing the mental arithmetic, you will have begun to get a stronger realisation of your sense of self in those areas.

[DC] Yeah, I came out the second my marriage ended, absolutely.

[SG] Ah, okay.

[DC] And I was fortunate enough to go to uni three months after the separation and my whole world opened up. So I was out, I was, you know, dipping into the queer scene, meeting people, you know, in queer spaces. And then I was at uni with these people who were just so inspiring, you know, they were creative, they were smart, they were really diverse experiences and backgrounds and, you know, the space for thinking and growing in that was just extraordinary and it felt like I was coming home. It felt like, you know, I tried to explain it to my mum at that particular stage and I said, I feel like until now I've had access to movies and that's exciting and that's beautiful, but now I've got access to Technicolor movies, not just black and white movies.

[SG] Oh second quote, queer Technicolor, we love it. And, you know, at the start, you know, of the show today, you said you know you'd originally thought that you were a lesbian and now use the term queer.

[DC] Mmmm.

[SG] How then over the last, say, 10 or 11 years or so has that evolved you get—where you get to a point where lesbian, yeah, we sometimes have to pick a label first and it doesn't quite work, whichever one it was, bi then lesbian. What's evolved since that, you know, you sort of think, 'no, I just don't fit that sort of particular label'? And of course everyone's label at any time is valid but sometimes we find a better one. What happened there?

[DC] A number of different things. The first thing is that, while I have not dated a cis man since the end of my marriage, I have dated trans guys, non-binary people. So you know the label of 'lesbian' doesn't, you know, quite fit with the, you know, the identities of the people I've dated. But to me, it's—to me the term 'queer', like I said before is more inclusive, but it also feels really political. It's taking a stand and a statement around, you know, my politics, not just my sexuality.

[SG] Yeah, well, that, that's really important. I wanted to ask that because we have had an SMS in, you know, just to reinforce, you know, that yes, some people, sort of the first thing when they think I'm not heterosexual, they go bi and then something else, something else. Because our guest—our listener, sorry, Nigel has said that not all of us you know, great number of us, I'll quote here, 'great number of us aren't just using bisexual as a stepping stone to lesbian or gay', which of course, is true—

[DC] Yeah, absolutely.

[SG] But your journey was that sort of, you know, try, you know, sort of park here for a bit and move on, park somewhere else. And now you've found the right spot.

[DC] Yeah. And for me—



[SG] Thanks, Nigel.

[DC] Thank you, Nigel, because that's absolutely true. It just wasn't my experience. But for me, I only used the word bisexual. I didn't ever feel that I was bisexual. I only used it because I actually didn't think that other people would feel it would be legitimate for me to suddenly be calling myself gay having just come out of a 12-year marriage.

[SG] Ah. Yeah.

[DC] So it was actually about other people's opinions rather than my own internal sense.

[SG] That kind of, that kind of makes sense. And so you were sort of, you know, in a way it was sort of like, well that's sort of the best word I had at the time and, you know, in a way and then you know, you didn't want to be with cis men anymore so it was lesbian. So it is that a common thing that people who are I'll say multi-gender attracted—

[DC] Yeah.

[SG] —if I can put it that way, go through. I've heard many a story of, you know, sort of, you know, people who end up under the multi-gender attraction broad brushstroke, whether they use bi, queer, pan, any label, of course, no label at all. And it's like, oh, it's sort of the bouncing back and forth, am I gay/lesbian, am I heterosexual, [frustrated noise]? Then, you know, the word clicks in and it's like, I'm—

[DC] This is who I am.

[SG] So you got the queer stuff sorted out and I just, without, you know—totally affirming the difficult stuff you went through at the end of your heterosexual marriage. I do want to say now, just to put this part of it, you're in a wonderful relationship.

[DC] An extraordinary relationship.

[SG] Yeah, yeah. Which is really, really awesome. And I think gives—says to people, perhaps anyone of any sexuality, gender who has to sadly leave a relationship that is not working, outright abusive, you know, if you want a relationship, yes, there is pain but you can find someone. And, you know, I say very warmly. I met you at the person you're with now and they are just a lovely human full stop.

[DC] I feel extraordinarily lucky. We were talking last night that we're coming into our fifth year now. And, and to be, you know, just over 50 and know that this is my person and this is my person for my latter years is just, yeah, it's so beautiful.

[SG] Yeah, it's good to have that someone there and I think maybe we all, well, maybe do we *need* that? Not necessarily, but it's something we would really like and perhaps, maybe later in life, which perhaps, gosh, there's all sorts of things I've parked here and I

want to come back to that as well. But, you know, leadership, you take on a particular form of leadership. So you did the creative writing course, and you were working. But how did you end up where you are now with your work and what do you do now? Because we want to really get to that, because that is vital work that sort of begins to put in some of the things you've talked about how people aren't given info, queers coming out late and how you see that, you've touched on this a bit already, but how that of course fits into leadership.

[DC] Okay, so first, what do I do? I head up an organisation called Body Safety Australia<sup>1</sup> and we run education programs in early childhood education, primary schools, secondary schools. We work with parents, carers, teachers, educators, children, young people and the programs are around sexuality, education, respectful relationships, the prevention of sexual and gendered violence, positive body image, you know. So it's a whole range of identity and well-being programs for young people and the people who care for them. I forgot the question, Sal.

[SG] So, yeah. How does it fit into your leadership? And how did you get to that?

[DC] How did I get there? Yeah, so after I finished my writing course a friend and I started up like a micro-publishing firm that published queer stories. We did that about 2010 and that was fabulous. And, and that sort of opened up a space of publishing emerging writers and artists in queer Australia of which there wasn't anything else like that at the time. There had been previously, but in that space there wasn't. And then I answered an ad for an organisation to teach sex ed.

[SG] Aha.

[DC] And it was just this, you know, small role to start with, where mostly I was going into schools and teaching puberty education. So talking about how to use pads and tampons and deodorant and unpacking, you know, the emotional journey of puberty and, you know, and I loved it. I absolutely fell in love with that role. So that's where, that's where my journey into this current space started.

[SG] Okay, so it seems like you'd found a bit of a, 'calling's a word that gets used a lot, but it sounds like it's reasonable.

[DC] Yeah, absolutely.

[SG] Yes, so you were doing that as an employee of an organisation?

[DC] Yeah.

[SG] And well, how did then that morph into doing an organisation of which you're now the CEO and therefore in, well, in an organisational chart sense but obviously in other ways in a leadership position, Body Safety Australia?

[DC] So I did that for a number of years and absolutely loved it. But I wanted to push the envelope further, you know. Sex ed needs to be queerer, sex ed needs to be more inclusive of people of colour, sex ed needs to be more inclusive of people of faith, people with disabilities, First Nations people. And, and I just, you know, I was really restless. I really felt like the sex ed that we were teaching was good and opened up a space for shame-free sex ed, but it really still came from that white heteronormative middle-class area and I just knew that we could do better. And so after a number of years, another person, Whitney Yip and I decided that we would go out on our own and just take that leap of faith. At the same time, I had been contacted by an organisation called Fairness In Religions In Schools<sup>ii</sup>, an organisation that was really lobbying hard to have religious education taken out of core class time in public schools. And they had come across these texts that were being used in New South Wales secondary schools. I don't know if you remember this, Sally.

[SG] It rings a bell.

[DC] Yeah. That were hugely damaging. They, they linked students to conversion therapy. They, they, you know, they were really shaming of female bodies, and, and female sexuality. They really perpetuated, you know, the systems under which family violence could exist, you know, really, really damaging. So FIRIS asked me to review these books and I did and it hit all of the headlines and I realised at that point that if I was going to be courageous and speak out about the damage that was being done when we talk about young people and their agency around their sex and sexuality, I needed to make sure that my views were supported by my employer. And if I had any concerns about that, I needed to actually be my own employer.

[SG] Mhm. Right, okay. So yeah that's, there's a lot to unpack in your last statements there. So, you know, I do remember that. And yes, I certainly remember that the, you know, the views in those, those materials that were, that came up were incredibly, you know, well, misogynistic and, you know, limiting of females/femininity and obviously—

[DC] They were hugely transphobic. They were hugely homophobic. Yeah. They were awful.

[SG] And I'm sure they would have been bi-erasing as well.

[DC] Totally.

[SG] Sort of, can't have people attracted to more than one gender, goodness me. So yeah, it would have been—they were pretty abysmal. Yeah. And yet you want—and yet there's a part of your heart, part of you listening to your inner voice going, I have to really speak out and do this my way.

[DC] Totally.

[SG] And you've had to do that since because a couple of years ago, and possibly a difficult topic. You faced some malarkey on the comments made on television because you were a cis woman, a woman with pink hair, who said we shouldn't, you know, we should be asking babies consent and of course, all the toxic masculinity control freaks out there, you know, had a pinstripe hissy fit, something like that.

[DC] [laughs]

[SG] Saying, 'but we can't control women and children exactly 100 percent'. And, you know, I'm laughing at it but seriously, you know, you copped as we've seen so much on, I've just actually read a report that will be released in a couple of weeks on electronic sort of abuse.

[DC] Yep.

[SG] Can't remember the exact term, it goes beyond sort of sexting and that sort of thing, but any sort of electronic online abuse and you copped that, and so many women do. And that would have been incredibly difficult; there you were just trying to speak up for your own beliefs and your own authentic self and what you believed was right and you copped a lot of tough stuff.

[DC] Yeah. It was a really awful time. I did, I did a few interviews at the time. It was the—it was at a time where Saxon Mullins, if people remember a really courageous young woman in New South Wales had been raped and, and there was, you know, conversations about the fact that well the, the guy didn't know that she wasn't consenting.

[SG] Right.

[DC] And I did a number of interviews on consent and this was this interview, was just this little tiny ABC News middle of the day, I thought perhaps three people might watch it and one of those would be my mum, you know. And the right-wing warriors got hold of this interview where I had said that this is how we teach consent to teenagers, this is how we teach consent to ten-year-olds, this is how we teach consent to four-year-olds, and even before that, we can work with parents on creating a culture of consent. So I did this interview and it was picked up and within three days, I had—the threats were coming in faster than I could delete them. You know, they were coming into my phone, they were coming into my social media, they were coming into my email, and they were violent and they were—I'd never experienced such a level of vitriol or violence before, and I was frightened, I was very frightened. And, and remembering that at that time, I had two teenage children, a teenage daughter and a non-binary child as well. A lot of the threats were about my sexuality, about my gender, and I was frightened for my children as well, you know, that these—because they were more than trolls, you know, that they would find out where we lived, that they would harm my child, you know, it was, it was awful.

[SG] Yeah, I mean, you know, no question, you know, obviously a horrendous situation. So drawing on your strengths as a leader, how did you cope, you know, sort of deal with that situation, specifically, what did you do? How did you work it through with your two children and sort of what were the things that got you through and what you did?

[DC] I remember very recently somebody said to me, you know, 'Deanne, we watched all of that unfold. And next thing I know you're still out there doing the work. Like how did you do that? How did you just get up and do the work?' And I'm like, 'because the work has to be done.' You know? And at the time people said to me, 'oh well why don't you dye your hair? Because you're so recognisable when you go out into the world, you know, why don't you dye your hair and be invisible for a while?' And I'm like why do I—like as tempting as that is, and as appealing as that is, I get to choose my visibility as a white cis woman and lots of people don't get to choose their visibility. And so, yeah, I-I didn't feel that it fit with my values to, to step away at that point and, you know, basically take advantage of the fact that I get to choose. So there was just no other option for me, you just keep going.

[SG] Got to plough on. Or not plough on, accelerate on and just checking the messages, I think there must be some telepathy going on with one of our awesome listeners here Mel who four minutes ago actually asked, 'Hi Sally, I'd like to ask Deanne how she dealt with the global interest in a diaper comment and babies, how did it affect her work and what specifically did she learn as a result from the backlash from some prominent media outlets? Enjoy your show.' So I honestly didn't see that until after you'd answered, but that's the sort of freestyle vibe that we do. So thanks for your question, Mel, but I think we've got it. Yeah. And I'm a bit, I'm always a bit careful about the sometimes twee saying of that which does not kill you can—oh, please, whichever one was it was it Nietzsche? Yeah, who said can only make you stronger? Because it never feels that way at the time.

[DC] No. And you know, and it's just blatantly not true, you know? Because harm is harm. I think it's really interesting because I'm still getting threats now. The nappy thing's blown up again in the media recently, and in the last week I've had probably five really horrific violent threats come into my social media or email. And I think the only difference now is I understand that, like, it doesn't affect me anymore, which concerns me, it concerns me that, you know, that kind of violence doesn't affect me. But, but I have a much better understanding now that this is not about me, that this is about them, that these people are, you know, and mostly, you know, they're men because that's, you know, that's the way these things roll. But, you know, they're sliding into my DMs or into my email, they're not saying it publicly, and they're expecting me to be to be frightened by that. And often, I will engage and people say, you know, you should just block the trolls, or, you know, don't engage and, and often I will, and I receive a number of apologies from people. But, but recently, this, this guy sent me some really, really violent messages and I just screenshot it, found all of the family members that I could find on his social media and sent it to them and he just lost his mind, 'you leave my family out of this!' I'm like, well, you know, you need to take responsibility for your actions.

[SG] Yep. Absolutely, absolutely. Well, look it's, you know, it's an interesting one and look, there is a tendency, it's—I don't think there's an all-or-nothing answer on whether you should, you know, to block or engage. And I had this happen in my work once where I made comments on this show's favourite topic, all-gender bathrooms and I got some guy saying, you know, that it's terrible and then you read between the lines, apparently been sadly some disrespectful behaviours to young girls at his daughter's school. So he cares about his daughters and so, you know, I said, look, I appreciate you care about your daughters, but have you thought about it this way? Maybe we need to start, you know, looking at how we can teach people to be more respectful, particularly people who misuse power in any form, including male power. And he wrote back and said, wow, in 20 minutes, I've learned more in a lifetime than I have. So sometimes you can win.

[DC] Totally.

[SG] I don't want to say 'win', I really want to specify that you can further things by engaging.

[DC] Yep.

[SG] But there are some people, you know, it's the talking to a brick wall, triple, quadruple, brick wall, and you're just going to bash your head against it and bleed.

[DC] Yeah. And some days you have the resilience to do it and other days, you know, there are other priorities for your energy.

[SG] Yeah. So look absolutely agree and I really admire your judgement and your courage, which is the sign of a leader. And I suppose that comes back to, you know, what we were saying earlier that you got bullied in the corporate sector and all the rest of it and, you know, sadly a horrible abusive intimate partner relationship early in life, but now you can deal with it in a more, we'll say nuanced or take it on its merits sort of way, deal with it, be in the present moment to it rather than going oh, help, that sort of thing.

[DC] Yeah, I think it really helps. I think a lot of the learning that I did post my divorce was, you know, learning about, you know, the systems and structures that allow for power inequity and, you know, and abuse and, and then when you couch it in that, then you see that this is not so much an individual but, you know, just somebody playing out, you know, something that is played out over and over and over again. And so it depersonalises it, so you can then find solutions so much more easily.

[SG] Yeah.

[DC] Yeah.

[SG] Yeah. Mel's come back in with a couple more messages, which also links in beautifully, telepathy continues. 'Deanne just answered my question. Sally, what does—' and I'll pop all these two at once '—what does Deanne think about Grace Tame and how the next generation deal with consent and male toxicity?' And also Mel said, 'it speaks volumes about their own insecurities Sally. What a great idea to expose bullying and toxicity.' And you know, so, I think there's some linkages there. And, of course, I'm thinking of the bravery of Brittany Higgins and so many others and, I'm sorry, I've forgotten the name you mentioned earlier from a few years ago.

[DC] Saxon Mullins.

[SG] Saxon Mullins, all these people who are speaking up and that, you know, it's not—it hurts. It's painful. It's emotional labour at times, but it's going to be more for you and everyone and me and if we don't.

[DC] Yeah.

[SG] So fair call. So, you know, the main question was therefore about Grace Tame, but also anything that comes off that.

[DC] So we work in so many different schools in so many different demographics and, and what I'm finding now is young people are just so extraordinarily empowered and they have such wise things to say in the classroom and outside of the classroom and they, they are taking the work that, you know, my generation has done and previous generations before me, and they are absolutely running with it in spaces that we never imagined could happen in schools. And the courage that I see from young people, young queer people, young, you know, cis girls in, in secondary schools and even in primary schools to say this is not okay, we won't take it. We will, you know, we want to organise a school walkout, we want to, you know, lobby for better consent education, we want accountability for sexual harassment or, you know, you know, sexist behaviour in schools. They blow me away.

[SG] It's pretty awesome. I mean, I think that—I agree that there's progress, I mean, so many times as a diversity educator on rainbow stuff and rainbow people and I hear the comment from people say in their 50s or 60s now who are really good people, but just don't know and they say, 'oh, I come home and my kids educate me', and that's something. And it does feel slowly that the conversations are advancing beyond 101 in most of it, although I would want to acknowledge that a lot of people are still asking 'what's intersex, never heard the word'.

[DC] Yeah.

[SG] Which I think we need to talk about as well. Also the trolling stuff, I just, I was thinking at the time, also of Ginger Gorman who's just done such awesome work there as well. And that she managed to engage after all the things she went through as well.

[DC] Yeah.

[SG] There were two things I wanted to pick up on before we run out of time. The music sat in the CD players but I don't care, as much as I love all the music I play, otherwise I wouldn't play it. Seriously, you know, I wanted to touch on sex ed for you mentioned diverse groups. And yes, acknowledging my privilege as someone who is white, non-Aboriginal, I'm sure there are things I don't know. What are the sort of things that we need to do from your, from what you've thought about, what you've seen, how—you know, I don't want you to give away too many free samples either.

[DC] [laughs]

[SG] But seriously, what are the things? Because I admit that, you know, it's like, okay there might be, I'm sure there are differences in background and things that could make a difference. I just don't know what I don't know.

[DC] Yeah. Well, I think one of the things that, that is really important to me is that the education that we're being delivered, is being delivered by a diverse group of people, so that children and young people have a representation of themselves in the people who are teaching them and people, you know, and the people who are teaching them have lived experience. So, you know, whether that's—our lead educator is a young Aboriginal woman and so when we work with Aboriginal communities, she is the person who will go into those spaces. It is not for me, I'm not First Nations, it's not for me to go into those spaces. So diversity of disability, diversity of gender, diversity of sexuality, you know, we try and you know, we have now a team of 11, 12 educators, and we try to ensure that the educators meet the diversity of the communities that we're working with. I think this is one of the most important things that we can do.

[SG] Yeah.

[DC] And then it is doing deep consultation with communities as well and asking, you know, young people and families. What is it that you need? What is it that you want to see? Working with cultural liaison officers, where we have schools with a high number of refugee and migrant communities, you know, to ensure that what we're delivering is, you know, honouring of culture and inclusive as well.

[SG] Yeah. So, gee, you're listening, you're doing allyship, you're saying, what can we do or not do to being, you know, to support people beyond our own identity. Wow. You know—sort of dry humour.

[DC] [laughs]

[SG] Wow, who'da thought it, you know, why don't more [of the] important people do it? So Mel's come in with another question. 'How does Deanne think the #MeToo movement has impacted on our own deeply ingrained toxic culture here in Australia and



we're seeing this week Australia's music industry is being exposed for its toxic behaviour.'

[DC] Yeah.

[SG] So yeah, there's #MeToo and music industry and toxic behaviour.

[DC] Look, it's, like so many things that become big media topics, it's polarising. So, we've seen things like the #MeToo movement, we've seen Grace Tame, we've seen Chanel Contos, really allow people to speak up. It's, it's broken down the shame that a lot of people who are victims, survivors of sexual abuse or assault, might feel and has allowed them to have a voice but what we are also seeing and I think that we'd better not finish on this Sally, because it's not the positive note that we want to end on, but we are also seeing really polarised conversations from students who feel that they have something to lose by us dismantling, you know, patriarchal structures. And so we're seeing what I would almost say is a radicalisation of a certain population of young men and teenage boys who are really pushing back on this notion. I think that we need to talk about that because we need to, you know, if we have young people in our lives, we need to be watching for these kinds of conversations. And what we're actually seeing in the classroom is teenage boys holding the absolute and utter belief that it is highly probable that they will be falsely accused of sexual assault before they turn 18 years old. And this is across demographics.

[SG] [low whistle]

[DC] We're seeing this kind of belief that can only be coming from online spaces. So, so whilst movements like #MeToo and Chanel Contos' petition are really, really empowering, we also need to prepare ourselves for the, the backlash that's coming and has started to come from those spaces and be one step ahead of that.

[SG] Okay, wow, all right, well, yeah, it's there. And you know, look sort of people always push back, as you, say if they feel they lose power. I suppose that if—I do want to end on a positive note, and then we'd better wrap up and make way for 'Freedom of Species' will be in any second. Where do you see your own, I mean, we never know where our own journeys are going but what would you perhaps like if you continue, if we go back to dreams, what are your dreams for yourself and, you know, overall let's finish on that note.

[DC] Great. Well I want, you know, I want, Body Safety to be so much larger than myself. I feel so incredibly privileged every day to have gone from a space where I was almost unemployable to now offering employment to nearly 20 people. This is like, this is—just blows me away that, that, that, you know, I have been part of that. I think, at the moment, the what, what I really am focusing on at the moment is that there needs to be a space for young people to have more, you know, young people who have experienced sexual assault or sexual abuse to have more agency in in what happens from there. At

the moment it's, it's still really disempowering, you know, a young person discloses, reports, and kind of is taken out of their hands.

[SG] Good pickup.

[DC] So I really want to, you know, obviously end sexual assault and sexual abuse, but if it does occur, I really want that power being put back into the hands of the person who's experienced that harm.

[SG] Which is a pretty fair thing to ask. And I think, I think that's a great note on which to finish. Power's overused; we'll say energise people. Deanne, I've been looking forward to having you on the show for ages. It's been a huge total pleasure and, look, just keep it rolling, keep in touch with 3CR and 'Out of the Pan'. Thank you so much for being you and for what you do and well, yeah. Humongous pleasure to have you on the show.

[DC] Thank you, Sally. It's been an honour to be here with you.

[SG] Cool. We've got to leave it there, racing out of here, better make way for 'Freedom of Species' and the crew coming in in a couple of minutes. Take it out today with a track from Amber which is a nice way to finish and above the clouds. Thanks for tuning in to 'Out of the Pan'. I'm Sally Goldner. Catch you next week.

[Song: 'Above the Clouds' by Amber]

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<sup>i</sup> <https://www.bodysafetyaustralia.com.au/>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://religionsinschool.com/>