



#MeToo, Act Two

Reflections from the gathering on Monday 28 October 2019

This was a warm and supportive gathering of 24 women, held at Queensland Theatre.

Kathryn Kelly (Belloo Creative):

- Belloo tries to do one event each year based on our feminist principles.
- Queensland Government released its [Sexual Violence Prevention Framework](#) and this event is to acknowledge and celebrate that.
- October is now [Sexual Violence Awareness month](#).
- Apologies from the Hon Di Farmer, Minister for Child Safety, Youth and Women and the Minister for the Prevention of Domestic and Family Violence.

Emily Coleman delivered a powerful and moving Acknowledgement of Country.

Margi Brown Ash began by reading an excerpt from Samantha Walton's poem '[What's Mine](#)':

For too long we've been experimenting with silence
until the silence became an art, and then the silence became a practice
We practiced at being ourselves until we got the shape and form
of it just right, the gentle edges, the downward lilt of every line
ingrown into the gut, where we wound the secret up just right
tight, so that the thread was spooled before it hit the mouth
a dogged little loop of control we could be proud of, like tearing off a nail
So now, making an accusation is like making a confession is like accusing
ourselves

Margi invited us all to break the silence and speak. She quoted civil rights activist Tarana Burke, founder of the Me Too Movement:

There is no silver bullet
No one person
No one way.
It is literally going to take us all doing all that we can at capacity to move the
needle just a little bit.
Lets work together
Lets heal together
And if you are all ready to do that work along with me, I can only leave you with
these two words
Me too.

NB: There is now a 24/7 help line specifically for people working in the arts: 1800 959 500.

Dr Kiley Gaffney lectures in the School of Creative Practice at QUT. She is involved in a gendered violence intervention program and is helping create a safe and respectful creative industries department. The MATE Bystander Program (<https://www.griffith.edu.au/arts-education-law/mate-bystander-program>) teaches members of the community how to recognise harm and have the confidence to speak out and offer help. Kiley has a background as a musician, theatre maker, performance art and feminist. She started studying as a way to understand how power works and now teaches embodied practice and music.

The MATE Bystander program gives four different approaches to use when witnessing violence/abuse.

1. Direct (“I see what you’re doing!”)
2. Indirect (“Let’s all go over there because that girl needs help”)
3. Distracting (Drop something / do something to break up the moment)
4. Protocol (“There’s a policy in place and you’re infringing it”)

Embodied practice: a performer’s body is the instrument and can become a material that other people get to mould. Dancers can be mute bodies – taking away voice is deeply problematic on a feminist level.

Girls start having their appearances monitored when they’re in primary school.

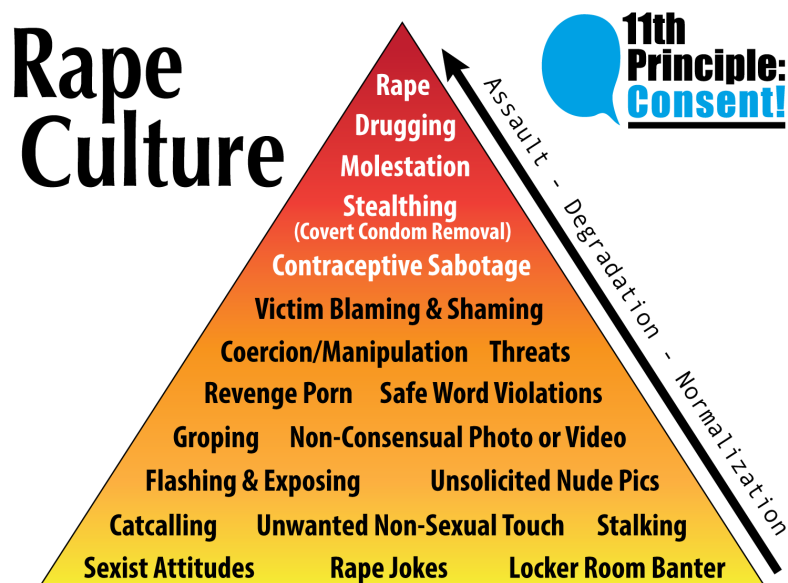
- There is a slow incremental journey from this focus on appearances through to domestic violence.
- Someone thinking they have the right to comment on your body is a form of assault.

Kiley trains academic and professional staff and students to be more aware of harassment and gendered violence. There’s such a deep level of sorrow and grief in the subject of sexual violence – even in the workplace. Being given the space to have a dialogue about the issues brings up a lot of stuff.

Madeline Römcke is a Brisbane theatre maker who likes to make theatre that explores women’s issues. She co-created and performed in *Deal or Ordeal*, which is a black comedy about rape culture.

Maddi started by acknowledging her privilege as a white, cis-gendered, able-bodied woman and recognised that Indigenous women and women with disabilities are far more likely to be the victims of violence.

Deal or Ordeal was created before #MeToo and used a game show format to discuss rape culture. It was interactive and they gave the audience consent cards so that they could constantly choose whether or not to participate.



Tolerance of the behaviors at the bottom supports or excuses those higher up. To change outcomes, we must change the culture.

If you see something, say something!
Start the conversation today.

www.11thPrincipleConsent.org

Reasons we don't speak out or act:

- We have a culture of complicity. The industry is built on symbolic capital. If you put someone offside or make them uncomfortable it can be incendiary.
 - We all have situations where we've been complicit or not spoken up when we could or should have intervened. Learning ways so that we can speak up more often.
- Cognitive dissonance – fear of getting it wrong. Don't want to speak out if no one else does.
- We can be a feminist on paper but when it comes to a heated moment it can all disappear.
- It's much easier to recognise behaviour and call it out after it's happened.

Intersectionality – it's easy to be dismissed when people have other labels they can give you (e.g. lesbian/queer/trans etc.)

Some of us are battling on one or two fronts and there are other women battling on ten and more.

Classism and racism sit heavily on people – we can't disentangle our privilege and sometimes we need to be quiet and listen so that other people can speak.

Clementine Ford: "you cannot dismantle patriarchy without also dismantling class oppression, white supremacy and capitalism."

It's important to build networks where we can have safe conversations.

Two years since #MeToo took off – how do we all feel about the rate of change? Tracy Spicer quoted as saying “Power is shifting but, like any large social movement, you’re only going to see the manifestations of change over the period of a generation.”

Margi asked: What would a world with equal genders look like?

- less fear
- able to walk alone at night*
- less judgement
- full personhood
- workplaces that embrace families
- fair

* When men are asked what they do when they’re walking alone to avoid getting raped, most of them have never had to think about it (they worry about being bashed but not raped), whereas women have so many tactics.

QS: Should the question be what a world *without* genders look like?

- Kiley noticed a flattening of women into non-binary, with men staying on top

Do we have a responsibility to act up and speak up?

- Are women once again doing the emotional labour of trying to affect change only to find that the system doesn’t support them?

Poem for #MeToo By Natalee Erceg

The amount of times I have heard
'But if you hadn't..'
after I had shared my story
Is enough to make me want to
sew my lips
shut for good.

*'But if you hadn't gone with him'
'But if you hadn't been alone'
'But If you hadn't worn this
said that
drunk what?!'
'Maybe all of this
could have been avoided
silly girl.'*

No.

Why are rape
and sexual assault
the only crimes
In which we so thoroughly examine
the behaviour of the victim?

**Why are rape
and sexual assault
the only crimes
In which we blame the victim?**

I am not responsible for the behaviour
of anyone but **myself**.

My dress
My words
My lipstick
and
My looks
the amount of drinks **I had**
and the company I was with
did not force someone
push them so beyond their own will
that they were compelled
beyond their own reasoning
to force themselves
on me.

**To take
my body
and treat it
as an object
to take my humanness
and in one swift
merciless action
destroy it
completely.**

We live in a society
that pardons the abuser
and blames the victim.

We live in a society where
less than 1 in 6
reports to the police
of sexual assault
are prosecuted
and even less
are reported
to begin with.

We live in a society
that makes it all too easy
to become a case of
'he said vs. she said'

Or a case of
'men will be men'
and we wonder why
powerful men

like Harvey Weinstein
get away with their crimes
and why
movements such as #metoo
take so long
to come into effect.

We live in a society
that still
after all this time
slut shames
and victim shames
when

the simple

unavoidable

universal truth is

the only way to avoid a rape
is to not commit one.

Services that can help:

- 1800 959 500 – Arts Wellbeing Collective (24/7 support for people in the performing arts)
- 1800RESPECT: National Sexual Assault, Domestic & Family Violence Counselling Service
- Lifeline: 13 11 14
- No to Violence (feminist assistance for perpetrators): www.ntv.org.au
- Sexual Assault Helpline Queensland (24/7): 1800 010 120
- Women’s Legal Service Queensland: 3392 0670

Protocols and templates

CAST (the Confederation of Australian State Theatres) has released uniform policies and procedures and they are available freely for other companies to use as templates. Find them at <http://www.queenslandtheatre.com.au/About-Us/CAST-Policies>

Further reading:

1. *#MeToo: Stories from the Australian Movement*. 2019. Ed. by Miriam Sved, Christie Nieman, Maggie Scott, Natalie Kon-yu
“This collection resists victimhood. It resists silence. It insists on change”

Reviewed in The Conversation: <https://theconversation.com/thirty-five-voices-one-movement-a-new-book-examines-metoo-in-australia-116053>

2. A page honouring some of the voices that have arisen from the #MeToo movement: <http://www.wildwomenpress.com/MeToo.html>
3. [Arts Hub article](#) on the long-term damage of sexual harassment