



National Centre of Excellence
for Complex Trauma



Welcome to the July edition of Breaking Free

Welcome to this month's Breaking Free. With a large proportion of the population experiencing lockdown or other restrictions, our resilience is being tested on a number of fronts. Resilience in the face of complex trauma is challenging enough, but with COVID-19 adding another layer, the strategies that we already have in place are tested even more so. Our lead article looks closely at resilience, and the need for us to continue to adapt our strategies and approach. What are the different levers that we can pull when we feel that things are getting on top of us? We have to acknowledge that things are changing constantly, and our feelings and emotions can change in response to our environment. As our article explains, resilience isn't the absence of pain or distress. It's developing the internal resources and external support to work through them.

We hope that our focus on strategies for self-care can help as well. The Art of Doing Nothing, a book by Veronique Vienne describes a creative list of ways to 'cajole your mind to let go and find some serenity'. Another book, "The Little Book of Hygge: The Danish Way to Live Well" by Meik Wiking talks about being kind to yourself, embracing simplicity, taking your time, relaxing and being present in the moment.

We've also included a link to the Blue Knot Fact Sheet: Trauma resolution and healing. This is a useful resource that outlines how survivors are in the best position to drive change in their lives with the help of professionals and a system that supports them.

As always, if you are wanting support, information or referrals, please do reach out to the Blue Knot Helpline and Redress Support Service for survivors of childhood trauma and those supporting them on 1300 657 380, Monday – Sunday, between 9am - 5pm AEST, OR National Counselling and Referral Service – Disability on 1800 421 468 for people with disability and experiences of trauma and those supporting them between 9am and 6pm AEST, Monday to Friday and between 9am and 5pm AEST on Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays.

Until next time, take care.
The Blue Knot Team



Resilience

The concept of resilience is a challenging one. It is often worn as a badge of honour with people considered to be resilient being seen as being superior to those who may be struggling with the effects of life's challenges. At the present time we are all being challenged by COVID-19. It has upended life as we know it, and we are all grappling with it individually and collectively. Many of us are experiencing the COVID-19 pandemic on top of experiences of trauma – violence and abuse which may still be ongoing. So how is it possible to consider resilience with all of this happening?

Firstly, resilience does not mean that you don't have any challenges or that you are never distressed. Rather it is the process of adapting in a positive way to experiences of trauma, adversity or ongoing stress. Resilience is a process of learning and building on your strengths and ways of being. It is a really complex process and depends on a whole range of things including the different risk and protective factors we all have. These can be biological, social, psychological or cultural and they all interact with one another to make us into the unique human beings we all are.

In Blue Knot we speak about being trauma-informed a lot. That's because we believe that being trauma-informed is the core of the way we all want to be treated, experienced and understood. Being trauma-informed means embracing a set of principles – safety, trustworthiness, choice, collaboration and empowerment into all of our interactions. It also means considering each person's culture, background, system or beliefs and barriers to connection and participation.

The different elements of a trauma-informed approach can help us build our resilience, on our path to healing. Here's a quote from Helen Milroy, Australian's first Indigenous doctor and former Australian of the year: 'Healing is not just about recovering what has been lost or repairing what has been broken. It is about embracing our life force to create a new and vibrant fabric that keeps us grounded and connected ... keeps us strong and gentle ... gives us balance and harmony, a place of triumph and sanctuary for ever more'. (Milroy, 2013)

Tips for building your resilience

• Focus on your wellbeing

Taking care of your body and mind. This is not always easy for people who have been abused or violated. That's because these experiences can make you feel as though you are worthless and not worth caring for. This is far from the truth. You are worth it – so do what you can to invest in the basics – eating well, staying hydrated, sleeping as best you can, and doing whatever exercise suits you.

Particularly now it can be easy to reach for the alcohol or drugs to numb our system. This makes complete sense as we all want the pain to go away. Maybe try other ways of calming your nervous system – mindfulness, meditation, yoga, dance, drumming, art, writing... whatever works for you. See our website for more resources.

• Build healthy relationships and social networks

Just as self-compassion is important although often hard to achieve, so too connection with compassionate people can make a big difference. Think about who you might feel safe with – who you might trust and see how best to connect with them. It is somewhat harder during lockdowns and social distancing but social connection is still very possible. Connecting with someone who believes you and validates your feelings can support you to build your resilience.

• Build your internal resources

You can do this through learning different strategies – strategies which help you manage the strong and overwhelming emotions we can feel. We can also all develop new ways to cope with challenges – coping strategies which are constructive and adaptive. Just be patient with yourself, as doing so can take time but new strategies can empower you and help you develop your sense of self and self-esteem, as so too support your resilience. Visit the website for more resources.

• Reach out for help and build your support networks

It can be hard to hold onto the hope that things can improve at time but remember that there is help and support. The Blue Knot Helpline and Redress Support Service has counsellors who will listen, hear and validate

the way you are feeling. They can help you with some strategies and tools which suit you and pathways to other support. You can call on 1300 657 380 Mon-Sunday 9-5 AEST. Visit the website for more resources.

Remember – resilience does not mean that you don't experience pain and distress. It is about developing the internal resources and external support to work through it, on your path to healing and recovery.

Different people have different goals for recovery and are able to acknowledge and celebrate the strengths of having survived their traumas. However, many people can and do recover from trauma. Recovery from traumatic experience is a process. It depends on a lot of different factors. A key factor is the support people receive. People need that support to process the parts of trauma where they felt hurt and betrayed by other people. They also need it to help build healthy relationships.

Our brain can develop and change in structure and function because of our experiences. This means that our brains can also help us recover from trauma (Doidge, 2007). We call this neuroplasticity. The brain responds to social experiences. Social experiences shape it. The good news is that neural growth and change continue through life. Positive experiences change the brain. Positive interactions support the person to build healthy connections between the nerves in the brain and to recover. This can foster healthy development, functioning and secure relationships.

A trauma-informed approach not only helps people recover from trauma, but also helps people live a life that is more than the experience of trauma. It can help people move towards a more holistic recovery and stronger engagement with themselves and the community. To acknowledge their own strengths, feel supported by the community and more able to contribute to it. And move beyond solely defining themselves as a victim of trauma to celebrate their survival as well as their growing resilience.



Pandemic Fatigue

While we can all experience pandemic fatigue in different ways, it is possible to counter its effects. Look out for some of these signs in yourself and those around you and take practical steps to be kind to yourself, stay connected, check in with each other, and seek professional support when needed.

Some of the feelings and behaviours you, or someone you know may be experiencing include:

- Tiredness
- Frustration
- Low in energy
- Restlessness
- Irritability
- Hopelessness
- Difficulty looking forward to tomorrow
- Dread
- Not wanting to be with others
- Increased use of alcohol or other substances
- Lack of enthusiasm for things you would normally enjoy

Some of the most effective ways to overcome these feelings include:

- Identify and practice self-care strategies that work for you 
- Keep kids communicating  Let children know it is ok to be worried, and talk it out
- Get sweaty  Exercise is great for mental health
- Reach out  To those who may not have connections
- Follow facts  from trusted sources
- Take a break  Do the things you've been putting off for a rainy day

If at any time you feel overwhelmed by any feelings, it is important that you talk to someone you trust. A GP, family member or friend, or make contact with any of the services (available 24/7) below:

Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Services: 1800 512 348

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Kids Helpline: 1800 551 800

www.headtohealth.gov.au



Monash Health Disability Action Plan Online Survey

To ensure Monash Health is best supporting those with disability, they are currently undertaking a consultation process to inform and update the current Disability Action Plan. Monash Health is proud of the diverse community of patients, clients and families that it supports. They are committed to providing a safe, accessible, inclusive and respectful environment for all patients, volunteers and employees. A key part of fulfilling that commitment is the implementation of Monash Health's Disability Action Plan. The Disability Action Plan underpins how Monash Health will actively continue to reduce barriers, promote inclusion, change attitudes and practices, and improve outcomes patients and visitors with a disability.

Monash Health is asking for valuable feedback from people with disability who have experienced childhood trauma, to ensure their needs are captured within the Plan. If you would like to contribute your feedback, please go here for more information : <https://monashhealth.org/about/publications/disability-action-plan/>



Strategies for Self-Care:

The Art of Doing Nothing

In her book *The Art Of Doing Nothing*, Veronique Vienne (1998) talks about the challenges of slowing down. The language is gentle and quaint, describing a creative list of ways to 'cajole your mind to let go and find some serenity'.

Here are some ideas from *The Art of Doing Nothing*

Procrastinating Fact 1. Water streams and meanders around obstacles. Fact 2. Our bodies and the world is 70% water. It is human nature to take the easy curved path - to meander. If you are seeking time out then give yourself permission sometimes to abandon any activity midway - give into the distraction and procrastinate a little longer. Achieve nothing, it is natural.

Sauntering (from French *sans terre* means without land or home) is way of procrastinating outdoors - walking in a slow, relaxed manner without any fixed destination or time frame.

Whistling lets off some pressure and lets air out of your body in a tense situation. If you can't whistle Vienne suggest you simply purse your lips and blow, experiment and persevere.

Breathing can of course occur whilst doing nothing. Vienne invites us to think of breathing as giving, not just taking. Visualise the plants and trees taking up your outbreath, No efforts or changes are required - remember that we are "doing nothing".

Lounging is the art of bringing your attention back down to earth at the end of the day. Vienne suggests you get as low to the ground as is comfortable, stay put for a while, and wait for your head to slow down - this may be sitting on the back step, or stretched out in your favourite chair. Lounging takes time, your view of the world is on a different level now and you may notice things around you that were unseen from standing.

Beach Lounging Stretched out on the beach, the sun makes us drowsy as you mold your body into the warm sand, get salt on your lips, and look at infinity – let your thoughts conform to the horizon.

Yawning is a 'sudden internal event that stretches muscles inside out... a tiny vortex of low pressure somewhere in the middle of the head. Soon it spreads through the entire body... dilates your pharynx, larynx, nostrils, and bronchial tubes; it lifts your eyebrows and your shoulders; it lowers your diaphragm to let your lungs expand... increases flow of blood to the brain... and the tongue retreats."

Napping "If you have too much to do, take a nap – just a ten minute nap." Many well known successful people have been known to take an afternoon nap – sleep research shows that a 10 -20 minutes nap refreshes the brain and increases intelligence, alertness and discernment.

Bathing Submerged in water you feel lighter, the water presses you as you slide around – bloated feelings go, as do backaches, sore muscles, joint pains as the whole body relaxes in a warm bath (or the ocean's natural spa of salt water). Add some natural fragrance, softening oils, dim lighting, and candles and do nothing.

There has been a lot written about how the high levels of happiness in Danish society and it is often explained by hygge - cultural way of living which incorporates a range of things that make people happy (not necessarily material possessions) i.e. allowing yourself to feel warmth, comfort,

cosiness, belonging, safety; and environments that enable relaxation and connection. You can read more about this in "The Little Book of Hygge: The Danish Way to Live Well" by Meik Wiking.

The Danish noun Hygge- pronounced 'hue-ga' actually refers to a feeling, an awareness or a sense. Hygge is about being kind to yourself, embracing simplicity, taking your time, relaxing and being present in the moment. Small pleasures: giving yourself a treat, a break from the demands of healthy living. Cake is hyggeligt, so is coffee, tea or hot chocolate, warm socks, candles, popcorn, — it is about forgetting the rules for a while.

If we could all spend more time 'actively' doing nothing, with permission to do less, we may develop more self compassion, and lives with a little less anxiety and stress. I think doing nothing is easier when it is an activity - is that still doing nothing?"



Fact sheet:

Trauma Resolution and Healing

No child should ever experience trauma, abuse, or neglect. As children, we have a limited capacity to protect ourselves, if at all. We are still developing physically, emotionally, and psychologically. Children cannot seek or find safety like adults can and are particularly vulnerable to abuse, neglect and violence.

This fact sheet explains how the best person to drive restoration is each survivor. Our role, in the system in which we work, may be better oriented to supporting survivors to work out what they really need, and then supporting their planning to achieve this. This is empowering, respectful and trauma-informed.

BLUE KNOT FOUNDATION

FACT SHEET: TRAUMA RESOLUTION & HEALING



No child should ever experience trauma, abuse, or neglect. As children, we have a limited capacity to protect ourselves, if at all. We are still developing physically, emotionally, and psychologically. Children cannot seek or find safety like adults can and are particularly vulnerable to abuse, neglect and violence.

Given this, the fact that a child has survived and continues to survive as an adult is a substantial achievement. They have developed resources and strategies to survive, as a child, and as an adult. Each person is an expert in their own experience and has their own strengths. This all deserves acknowledgment and celebration. However, it is also important to note that childhood trauma survivors are often very good at caring for others but can struggle in caring for themselves. Many don't recognise their own strengths.

Considering these strengths, the best person to drive restoration is each survivor. Our service systems however make strong assumptions about what is best for survivors. Our role, in the system in which we work, may be better oriented to supporting survivors to work out what they really need, and then supporting their planning to achieve this. This is empowering, respectful and trauma-informed.

Working with Professionals

For those who experience childhood trauma, abuse, and neglect, there is a growing evidence base for what is helpful and restorative when working with professionals. In general, we know that the following strategies can be restorative when implemented by professionals:

- Working with the trauma-informed principles of safety, choice, empowerment, trustworthiness, and collaboration.
- Providing care and support, using strategies that help to counteract the feelings of the original experience of the person's historic abuse and neglect (e.g., if they were not validated, we validate them).
- Focusing on what has happened to that person, as opposed to pathologizing the person (e.g., not looking at "what is wrong" with a person).

Reiterating that child abuse and neglect is never a child's fault and that they are never to blame.



BLUE KNOT FOUNDATION

FACT SHEET: TRAUMA RESOLUTION & HEALING



Opportunities for Systems Change

Despite the prevalence of the childhood trauma, service provision for those directly and indirectly affected remains largely inadequate – inaccessible, unaffordable and poorly matched to need. There has been an endemic failure to invest in person-centred trauma-informed recovery-oriented services across the life span.

Primary care and frontline services are not equipped to identify, appropriately respond to, and/or comprehensively address the complex needs of abuse survivors. Significant gaps and inequities in accessibility to, affordability of, specialist services and trauma-informed supports are compounded by poor care coordination and limited referral pathways.

Additional challenges relate to the survivor difficulties in seeking and sustaining help, due to difficulties around trust, safety and prior experiences of re-traumatisation.

Empowering recovery from childhood trauma recognises the needs for survivors across systems of care, and across their life cycle. It also recognises the importance of services not only for individuals but for families impacted by trauma, violence and abuse.



BLUE KNOT FOUNDATION

FACT SHEET: TRAUMA RESOLUTION & HEALING



Trauma is a state of high arousal that affects how the different domains of learning and memory work together. Trauma is biochemically encoded in the brain.



The brain is not static in structure and function but is continually shaped by experiences. Throughout our lives, our nerve cells can grow and pathways between them can repair. This is called neuroplasticity.



Research establishes that neurons (nerve cells) are activated by experiences, especially those involving emotional relationships. Our wellbeing depends on our relationships with others.



Healthy relationships soothe people affected by trauma and promote recovery and wellbeing.



Positive relationships build good connections in our brain right across our lives. These foster healthy development and functioning.



When the nerve cells and different areas of the brain work together (integration), longstanding trauma can be resolved, and its negative intergenerational effects intercepted.



People can and do recover and when parents have made sense of their trauma, their children do better. On the other hand, less constructive experiences in our relationships negatively impact on our wellbeing and possibilities for recovery.



Recovery from trauma requires support as 'going it alone' only compounds the isolation of the original trauma. Relational trauma is healed within healing relationships



Just as damaging experiences change the brain in ways that are negative for subsequent functioning, new, different and positive experiences also change the brain in ways that are conducive to health.



Simone Biles has had to contend with more than most athletes, something her critics don't understand

It is strange to consider given events of the last two days, but Simone Biles might still wander back into the Ariake gymnastics centre and compete again. With respect to her physical endurance, it would not even be a great surprise — in the past she has won major events with agonising kidney stones and broken toes on both feet.

The attacks on her spirit this week have been harder to bear. “I don’t trust myself as much anymore,” Biles said after her emotional withdrawal from the team event at Tokyo.

“Maybe it’s getting older. There were a couple of days when everybody tweets you and you feel the weight of the world. We’re not just athletes, we’re people at the end of the day, and sometimes you just have to step back.”

So, she did, withdrawing from the team event. Normal people understood. Certain others set new world records for not understanding.

The most illuminating reactions came from fellow

gymnasts, who highlighted the grave dangers presented when an athlete like Biles baulks mid-air and completes a 1.5 twist instead of a 2.5. The emotional implications were one thing, they said, the risk of life-threatening physical injury quite another. She could have been crippled.

Eyeing Biles’s uncomfortable grimace, it was hard not to be reminded of the moments before the start of the 400 metres final at Sydney in 2000, when Cathy Freeman’s pained expression told of the unrelenting pressure and expectation faced by the small number of athletes who occupy the very top tier. Biles is one. Naomi Osaka is another.

This week Biles has carried additional burdens on top of every Olympian’s excruciating task: prepare unwatched for four years, perform with the eyes of billions trained on you.

Biles is 24, an age that those of us who are well past it can recognise as a time of interior flux. Few of us can understand what it is like to do that in public. Fewer still can grasp what sort of ‘escape’ might be found

in the private life of an American gymnast of the last decade.

It is unfair to any survivor of sexual abuse to provide constant reminders of their ordeal, but a proper reckoning with Biles's story is impossible without it. In 2018, she shared with the world an experience gruesomely common to US national team members: she had been sexually assaulted by their team doctor, Larry Nassar.

It is an understatement to call it an extra hurdle to go with the many imposing obstacles that gymnastics already places before an athlete. Public property by then, in the prime of her career, Biles had to work through the crime's aftermath while managing the imperative to perform.

The sport that exposed her to man's worst betrayal also asked her to do nothing less than elevate humanity. She responded with unprecedented feats of athletic brilliance. Where others would have crumbled, she stuck the landing. And how.

Before the Games, I was watching a clip of Biles's preparations for Tokyo. I won't pretend I know the technical label for what I was watching as her body spun through the air, but there was a point at which my prior knowledge of an athlete's adherence to the laws of gravity and physics went out the window: mid-flight, her trajectory briefly seemed to slow, and she reached what felt like the natural the peak of her arc through the air. But something inexplicable happened and she was suddenly accelerating further up and away from the floor.

The shock of it all was so profound that you barely noticed her perfect landing. It left you with a rare impression in sport — of not wanting to know what had just happened or how, so you could instead play the video on a loop and just revel, childlike, in the mystery of it.

When someone is capable of something like that, you have to doubt the fitness to comment on her struggles of someone else like, say, Piers Morgan, who attacked Biles overnight. As was probably his intention, Morgan's contrived tirade attracted attention and won him the hotly-contested gold medal for hypocrisy: 'Hang on, the guy who sulked off the set of his TV show is calling someone else a quitter?'

It meant that few lingered on his introductory paragraphs, which were more revealing of what Biles contends with. In them were cringeworthy descriptions of the \$390 leotards she endorses and the placement on Biles's own ones of a rhinestone goat to symbolise her greatness.

It requires very little mental strain to decode these ideas: the obsession with women's bodies and policing what they wear; the right of black athletes to monetise their success without being scrutinised in

ways that white athletes rarely are; the anti-African hammering of any black athlete who proclaims or predicts their own greatness.

The 'G.O.A.T' (greatest of all-time) term can be traced back to Muhammad Ali, whose G.O.A.T. Inc. company was established in the early 1990s to clip the ticket on the rampant commercial use of his intellectual property. By 2000, G.O.A.T. became an LL Cool J album title. It was rooted in black culture and thought.

In the intervening time, it has been co-opted by the white sports and media worlds tellingly: as a way of exulting white athletes like NFL star Tom Brady and tearing down black ones like Biles. 'Don't get so far ahead of yourself or make too much money, Simone — just shut up and be brilliant.'

To meaningfully grapple with the concept of black bodies and what the sports world does to them, we non-black observers would need to sit down, shut up and prepare to be mortified by how little we know. Not as self-flagellation. Done earnestly, it could profoundly reshape our worlds, and those of the people we misunderstand and harm. But that sort of thing is not the remit of modern media's screamfest, so instead we have Piers.

Unfortunately for Simone Biles, Olympic gymnastics is a canvas on which all these problems become abundantly clear. But stand in front of a mirror and ask yourself: What if it was my body? What if it was my soul?

The Foster inquiry recommendations for parliamentary workplaces are, at best, a band-aid

Earlier this week, the Morrison government announced that it had agreed to adopt all ten recommendations from the final report by Stephanie Foster, a Deputy Secretary at the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, into the processes and procedures relating to serious incidents of bullying and sexual abuse in the parliamentary workplace.

Brittany Higgins, whose alleged rape in Parliament House in 2019 launched a movement, welcomed the move. She particularly praised the decision to introduce an independent complaints mechanism in Parliament.

On the ABC's *The Drum*, journalist Samantha Maiden, who broke Higgins' story, called the reforms "historic" and rightly praised Higgins for "what she has done, which no one else has been able to do for years and years of trying, to improve the complaints process around Parliament House."

But without wishing to be contrary — because I too tip my hat to Higgins for helping get us to this point — I can't be so positive.

The Foster report and its recommendations are, at best, a band-aid. They won't make Parliamentary workplaces safe, nor were they intended to. They are a stop on our continuing journey to that much wished for destination, but the road ahead is long.

In the meantime, I'm weary of media headlines that chalk the Foster recommendations up to a win for women and bestow upon Prime Minister Scott Morrison a claim to victory I don't think he deserves.

To understand why I've come to this conclusion, I think it's worth reviewing the timeline of events that brought us to this point in time.

In December 2017, shortly after #MeToo went viral, I investigated Parliament's sexual harassment policies for political staffers and found them woefully inadequate – "incomprehensible" is the exact word Alex Grayson, a very experienced employment lawyer I consulted with at Maurice Blackburn, used.

When I pointed out the shortcomings to the Department of Finance, with whom political staffers have the employment relationship under the Members of Parliament (MOPs) Act, they declined to substantively reply.

Fast forward a few months, and in February 2018, Deputy Leader of the Labor Party Tanya Plibersek put the Coalition under further pressure to review the policies – and the Department of Finance agreed. Speaking at a Conference, Plibersek said, "Australians are right to expect that their Parliament should be a leader not a straggler when it comes to preventing sexual harassment."

The policy was quietly amended in 2019.

On November 9 2020, Louise Milligan's explosive story "Inside the Canberra Bubble" aired on ABC's Four Corners. Soon after, Professor Kim Rubenstein and Trish Bergin, co-directors of the 50/50 by 2030 Foundation at the Faculty of Business, Government and Law, University of Canberra, called for Kate Jenkins, Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner, to be given the resources to conduct a national, independent survey of people who work or have worked in the Australian Parliament. Morrison declined to take them up on their suggestion.

Then, on February 15 2021, Samantha Maiden published her first story about Brittany Higgins. Within 24 hours, Morrison announced the Foster review at a press conference where he famously said his wife, Jenny had "clarified" things for him and encouraged him to look at the situation "as a father".

At the time, many, including Rubenstein and Bergin, voiced concerns about how "independent" the Foster review could be. They continued to press for a truly independent arms length inquiry conducted by Jenkins.

As this debate was unfolding, I took the opportunity to revisit the Coalition government's since revised policy. Alex Grayson conducted another thorough review and found that they remained "manifestly inadequate", further adding that "the (revised) policy could easily lead to outcomes where those who have been sexually assaulted do not complain internally and do not know that they should alert the Police."

"And even if they did- the Policy (if they ever found it) could easily lead a traumatised victim to believe that this type of reporting is not encouraged," said Grayson. Given what Higgins has since said about her experiences, how true those words are.

It then took another three weeks and continued torrid headlines for Morrison to concede that a truly independent, arms-length review was necessary. He commissioned such a review from Kate Jenkins on March 5th.

It's worth noting what happened in the days preceding Morrison's decision on March 5th to concede that an independent arms-length review was necessary. On March 3rd, Christian Porter identified himself as the minister at the centre of historic rape allegations. And, on March 4th, The Australian reported defence Minister Linda Reynolds called Brittany Higgins a "lying cow".

It is reasonable to conclude from this timeline that the penny finally dropped for Morrison, as many were so fond of saying on social media at the time, that this was "not going away". And the timeline illustrates that the Foster review might have been all we got, as Morrison attempted to "manage" a rapidly escalating political crisis, had it not been for the continued perseverance of many calling for more.

My point is that Scott Morrison and his government had to be dragged kicking and screaming to the table every step of the way — both to acknowledge the severity of the issue and to seek appropriate solutions.

Setting aside the considerable questions I have about the Foster recommendations – will a few hours of sexual harassment training really change anything? Will the "time-stamp" limiting the measures to the current Parliament mean there's no pathway to justice for many victims and consequences for many perpetrators?

Keeping in mind that the report conceded the Department of Finance had received 70 complaints since 2017, half of those relating to Parliamentarians and MPs – it is clear to me that they were never meant to be a meaningful means of addressing an enormous problem.

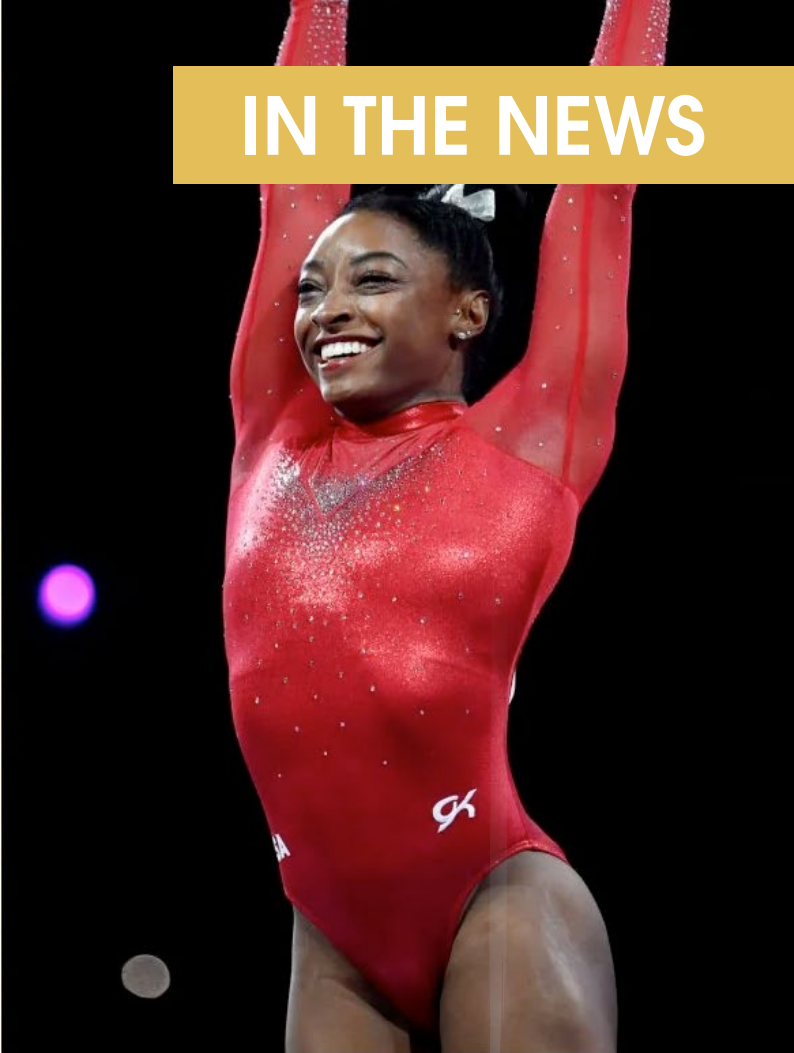
They were a calculated, and failed, attempt by Morrison to manage a political crisis.

I await with great anticipation the results of Kate Jenkins far more substantive inquiry, which are expected in November. And I hope that the Morrison government will show the same interest in adopting those recommendations, even though they don't come from someone inside the tent. That's the point.

Kristine Ziwick is a regular contributor. She tweets @KZiwick



IN THE NEWS



Simone Biles' mother couldn't afford to feed her. She's now the world's greatest gymnast.

When gymnast Simone Biles competes, you might notice a goat on the back of her bedazzled leotard.

The 24-year-old wears the rhinestone symbol to declare she is the GOAT - the greatest of all time. And the four-foot-eight gymnast undeniably is.

This week, the New York Times noted that Biles is often compared to Serena Williams, Tom Brady and Tiger Woods for her dominance in her sport. But even that doesn't do her justice, the publication pointed out.

"(That) analogy minimises her athletic brilliance because those competitors lose from time to time — and she doesn't," journalist Juliet Macur wrote.

Since 2013, the American gymnast has not lost an all-round title. She's also the only woman who has performed the dangerous Yurchenko double pike in competition - a move she is expected to pull off at the Tokyo Olympics.

In the theme of making history at these Olympics, Biles is also competing to become the first female gymnast in 50 years

to win back-to-back titles in the Olympic all-around.

But the path to gymnastics glory has not been an easy ride. Here's what you need to know about Simone Biles.

Simone Biles' childhood.

Alongside her three siblings, Biles was born to a mother who struggled with addiction to drugs and alcohol, as well as an absent father.

She remembers eating cereal with water when she was young, because they could not afford milk.

In her Facebook Watch series, Simone vs Herself, the 24-year-old reflected on her early childhood.

"Growing up, me and my siblings were so focused on food because we didn't have a lot of food," she remembers. "I

remember there was this cat around the house and I would be so hungry. They would feed this cat and I would be like, 'Where the heck is my food?' And so I think that's (why) I don't like cats... because this freaking street cat, she always fed it. But she never fed us."

In 2002, when Biles was aged five, her birth mother lost custody of her four children, who were placed into foster care.

Within 12 months, Biles' maternal grandfather, Ron, and his second wife, Nellie, adopted her and her younger sister, Adria. They both now call Nellie and Ron Mum and Dad. Simone's other two siblings were adopted by Ron's sister.

The same year she was adopted, Biles visited a gymnastics centre while on a day-care field trip.

As they played around, one coach noticed Biles' raw and rare talent and sent a letter home to her parents asking if she would be interested in joining their classes.

It quickly became clear just how special her talent was.

Olympic dreams.

In 2016, Biles became a household name worldwide when she won five medals, four of them gold, at the Rio Games.

In her red, white and blue leotard, Biles shone in the spotlight as the then-teenager was hailed as a 'once-in-a-lifetime' athlete. What makes her so great? The gymnast is known for her brilliance in the floor exercise specifically, as well as her willingness to take risks.

Many have called her unbeatable on the floor.

Her Olympic teammate, Sunisa Lee, told the New York Times, "Simone is so good that the rest of us can only hope to finish second to her in the all-around. What else can you do? She does all sorts of crazy things no one else can do."

On Sunday, she started her campaign at the Tokyo Games to become the most decorated gymnast in World Championships and Olympic history.

After competing in the women's qualifying on Sunday, Biles has made the finals and will next compete on Tuesday in the women's final.

Simone Biles' brother's murder trial.

In August 2019, Simone Biles' brother, Tevin Biles-Thomas, was accused of fatally shooting three people at a New Year's Eve party in 2018.

He was arrested and charged with murder, homicide, voluntary manslaughter, felonious assault and perjury in relation to the shooting.

Police alleged that an uninvited group walked into a house party and an altercation ensued between the uninvited guests and those who were invited. It resulted in the deaths of three people.

When the news broke, the champion gymnast released a statement asking the public respect her family's privacy as they "deal with (their) pain".

"My heart aches for everyone involved, especially for the victims and their families," she wrote on Twitter. "There is nothing I can say that will heal anyone's pain, but I do want to express my sincere condolences to everyone affected by this terrible tragedy.

But in June this year, Biles-Thomas was acquitted of the murder charges due to insufficient evidence. No one has been found guilty for the murder of the three people.

Survivor of sexual abuse.

In January 2018, USA Gymnastics team doctor Larry Nassar was sentenced to 175 years in prison for molesting gymnasts under the guise of giving 'treatment'.

More than 500 women and girls have accused Nassar of abuse. Simone Biles is one of them.

In January 2018, Biles shared her story of being sexually abused by Nassar.

"Most of you know me as a happy, giggly, and energetic girl," she wrote in a statement on Twitter. "But lately I've felt a bit broken and the more I try to shut off the voice in my head the louder it screams.

"I am not afraid to tell my story anymore. I too am one of the many survivors that was sexually abused by Larry Nassar. Please believe me when I say it was a lot harder to first speak those words out loud than it is now to put them on paper. There are many reasons that I have been reluctant to share my story, but I know now it is not my fault."

"It is not normal to receive any type of treatment from a trusted team physician and refer to it horrifyingly as the 'special' treatment," Biles continued. "This behaviour is completely unacceptable, disgusting, and abusive, especially coming from someone whom I was TOLD to trust."

Indeed, Biles has endured and overcome great adversity to become the best gymnast the world has even seen.

Just recently, before heading to the Olympics, she had four words tattooed to her collarbone to acknowledge her strength and resilience.

It reads: "And still I rise."

Feature image: Getty/YouTube.



My 23-year-old son was at the lockdown protests on Saturday. This is how I feel.

My 23-year-old son attended the protest in Sydney on Saturday, and this is how I feel.

I am scared. Scared that he may contract COVID because he wasn't wearing a mask. And I'm scared that he could transmit it to his housemates.

I am angry that due to his actions and those of thousands of others, we are likely to see this virus spread exponentially and won't see the end of lockdown for many months.

I feel ashamed. Questioning myself and my parenting skills. What did I do wrong that has led him to this?

I am sad. Essentially, my relationship with my son is now tenuous. My beautiful, smart boy who used to be able to finish my sentences, and I his.

But most of all, I feel helpless.

12 months ago we had a strange conversation.

He told me that the reason Melbourne had gone back into lockdown was so the military could move in and release

all the kidnapped children who were being kept in tunnels under Melbourne.

When I questioned him further, he told me that there was a satanic cabal of serpent people who were ruling the world. This was my introduction to QAnon.

He sent me a six-hour video which I dutifully watched.

It was full of random 'facts' that had been drawn together into a narrative.

My understanding of what he believes is that there is a satanic cabal that has infiltrated our governments, media and all parts of the economy in order to keep us prisoners on this earth without achieving our full spiritual potential.

Apparently, the conditions for this full spiritual potential or 'awakening', on a mass scale, are occurring right now.

The lockdowns and the vaccine are how the cabal is trying to prevent us all from taking part in the awakening.

Why would they want to do that? Because after the

awakening everyone will be equal and all the worlds' wealth will be distributed evenly, no one will need to work and we will all have 'super human' abilities.

Not something the cabal wants to see.

Right now, you're probably slinging around terms describing my son as a fruitcake, an idiot, moron, whackjob, etc.

It's a laugh, right? No, it's not.

Prior to lockdown last year, my son was an average 22-year-old male.

Looking forward to his final year at uni, working a part-time job in hospitality, going to the gym and partying with his mates.

Then lockdown hit. And for whatever reason, I think he started to look for answers explaining what was happening in the world, and in doing so, he tipped over the edge and suspended all disbelief.

And what can I do to help him? It seems, absolutely nothing.

I have read books, I have watched expert interviews and listened to podcasts, I have joined Reddit groups for people whose loved ones are QAnon believers.

This is what I have found out. He is essentially trapped in a cult. But I cannot go and 'kidnap' my son and physically remove him from the people feeding him this information.

The information is constantly available to him, he feeds off it on the dark web. Algorithms continue serving him more and more of the information.

The process of delivering the information is gamified.

Each believer needs to seek out clues and information in order to educate themselves.

As a young teenager my son devoured the 39 Clues series of books which operated in a similar way. I am not surprised he enjoys this hunt for new information.

You cannot argue the 'facts' with him. Any fact I offer is tainted by its source from mainstream media or Google who are 'all in on it'.

It is apparently counter-productive to argue the facts anyhow, as when they argue their 'facts' it further entrenches them in their beliefs. If a forecasted event doesn't occur they just change the narrative to make it fit.

Exposing them to 'normal life' is to be encouraged so they continue to have some access to normality. Though this is made ever more difficult when all they want to try to do is convert you or 'red pill' you to their beliefs.

My son truly believes that he is one of the very few who has become awakened and has a duty to educate the rest of us.

He firmly believes that attending the protest yesterday is for the benefit of mankind. He does not see that he has put anyone, including himself at risk. He believes COVID is a hoax, perpetrated by the cabal.

In fact, he thinks there will come a point in time when we will be thanking him for taking up this cause on our behalf.

Fine him or take police action? You are just making him a martyr to his cause.

I am not arguing that he should not be hit with these consequences for what he did this weekend. I am just making it clear that it will not stop people who, like him, are living in a different reality than the rest of us.

I'm sure not everyone who attended the protest yesterday are living in that separate reality, but I saw enough slogans and signs to see that a lot of people are.

I am heartbroken knowing that there are thousands of other loving families out there who have 'lost' a family member to this cult just like I have.

Who have been looking for a way to help their loved one climb out, with no success. Who are sitting at home feeling shame and being too scared to talk about this issue for fear of being ridiculed.

The real story of QAnon is not whether Scomo's mate tried to influence him to say the term 'ritual abuse' in his National Apology to Victims and Survivors of Institutional Child Sexual Abuse, it is a story of the thousands of people, like my son, who are in a cult, without any way of getting out.

It is a story about the thousands of families watching their loved ones go down the rabbit hole, powerless to help.

It is a story about how the internet has created an alternative reality and we are doing nothing about it.

Feature Image: Getty.

Excessive strip-searching shines light on discrimination of Aboriginal women in the criminal justice system.

In January, an unnamed incarcerated Aboriginal woman on remand at the Alexander Maconochie Centre in the ACT was the victim of an alleged strip search undertaken by four guards in full riot gear in full view of male detainees. The woman is a survivor of previous sexual assault and also has a serious heart condition.

Footage of the incident has been suppressed by the courts.

This case, along with many others, has sparked grave concern among health care professionals who work with Aboriginal women detainees. Some women subjected to strip searches have been as young as 15 years old.

Aboriginal women's bodies are considered a sacred part of women's business in Aboriginal lore and culture. Exposing sensitive parts of an Aboriginal woman's body in front of men results in additional shame and guilt, as they are not able to uphold sacred values of their culture.

It is clear the justice system is failing to address the discrimination of Aboriginal women. At almost every stage of the criminal process, there are countless issues with police relations with Aboriginal women, including

While there are international legal instruments Australia endorses (like the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples), the government still makes little to no effort to uphold the rights of Aboriginal women in prison when it comes to self-determination and freedom from discrimination.

Ultimately, the system as it stands is operating in a culturally unsafe way.

Unnecessary strip-searches bring calls for inquiry

For any woman who is detained in prison, strip searches are a traumatic and confronting experience. Yet, in Australia, Aboriginal women detainees are strip searched at alarmingly higher rates than non-Indigenous women detainees.

According to the Melbourne-based Human Rights Legal Centre (HRLC), 208 strip searches were conducted on women detainees at AMC from October 2020 to April 2021. Of those, 121 were Aboriginal women, or 58%, despite the fact Aboriginal women made up just 44% of the prison's population.

On January 22, Julie Tongs, CEO of Winnunga Nimmityjah Aboriginal Health Service, wrote a letter to the ACT corrective services minister, Mick Gentleman, expressing her concerns with how strip searches are conducted on Aboriginal women.

Ms Tongs demanded an inquiry into the allegations of strip searches of Aboriginal women detainees done by male officers or with males present. Her suggestion, based on years of experience working with incarcerated Aboriginal women, is for strip searches to be eliminated or at the very least, be used as a last resort.

Strip searches are only appropriate if there are fears the detainee might self-harm or pose a risk to staff or other inmates. In the letter, Ms Tongs also questions whether the potential existence of contraband is reasonable grounds at all for carrying out a strip search.

Despite the Corrections Management Act 2007 (ACT) requiring officers to provide a reason for each strip search they conduct, information released to the Human Rights Legal Centre revealed 49 strip searches during the six-month period at AMC appear to have been done without a reason.

Reform is needed beyond truth-telling catchphrases

One of the many recommendations in the (Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody 1991) report was that police violence, rough treatment, and verbal abuse of Aboriginal persons, including women and young people, should cease immediately.

Despite countless reports, further royal commissions and inquiries revealing issues in the criminal justice system with its treatment of Aboriginal people, we are yet to see the necessary structural reform required to change things for the better.

One of the issues identified in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner June Oscar's recent Wiyi Yani U Thangani (Women's Voices) report is the exclusion of Aboriginal women from participating in decision making on necessary law and policy reform.

The report shows how such a dialogue can help guide the structural reforms needed. However, by maintaining the exclusion of Aboriginal women and the further marginalisation of Aboriginal people sentenced to lengthy terms of imprisonment, the system remains the same.

Potential strategies for structural reform are also outlined in reports such as the deaths in custody royal commission and the Australian Law Reform Commission's 2018 Pathways to Justice report, but they continue to fall by the wayside. All while the rates of Aboriginal women being incarcerated continue to climb.

Over-representation of Aboriginal women in prisons

Research findings from the Keeping Women Out of Prison Coalition show that almost a third of women prisoners in Australia are Indigenous, despite making up less than 3% of the population.

Further, two-thirds of imprisoned Aboriginal women are mothers, and most suffered from mental health issues, disability and experiences of trauma and abuse. Those factors of trauma and disadvantage can be drivers for Aboriginal women ending up in Australia's criminal justice system in the first place.

In its current state, the criminal justice system is inadequately addressing the needs of Aboriginal women. This is particularly so for those who are on remand and unable to access necessary services while they are detained.

The Keeping Women Out of Prison Coalition confirms this and found there are also difficulties with providing services such as therapeutic sessions for women detained in prison.

The silence and complacency of ministers who could advocate for prison reform shows how power imbalances unfavourable to Aboriginal women are maintained. This is precisely how the government kicks the can on truth-telling processes without ever affording Aboriginal people substantive rights through structural reform.

Where to from here?

There needs to be urgent, systematic and structural reform of Australia's criminal justice system. Reform of this kind must focus on addressing the entrenched, systematic racism and gender bias experienced by its fastest-growing population – Aboriginal women.

The system must stop punishing Aboriginal women and further entrenching their disadvantage, and instead promote healing, support and rehabilitation.

To do so, the voices of Aboriginal people and in particular, women, must be heard. It is only once this type of dialogue is created that necessary reform can take place.

Aboriginal women need to be protected, empowered and supported — not silenced.

Authors: Dr Dani Larkin, Lecturer/Deputy Director of the Indigenous Law Centre, UNSW

Read more <https://theconversation.com/excessive-strip-searching-shines-light-on-discrimination-of-aboriginal-women-in-the-criminal-justice-system-163969>

Disability advocates say businesses need to lose 'fear of the unknown' to find untapped potential

When Nathan Basha was born, his parents were given three options: to "institutionalise" him, adopt him out or take him home.

The decision they made was life changing.

"My parents made a pact to do everything they could do to make my life as ordinary as possible," he said.

"By them choosing option three, 'take him home', (it) has changed my life and has enabled me to live a life full of potential."

Mr Basha, who lives with Down syndrome, said he found it hard to believe his parents were confronted with such a choice.

"How is it that someone can categorise a life like that?" he said.

The disability advocate, who has spoken at advocacy events, political forums and his former high school, says his current mantra is: "That's not who I am."

Mr Basha said his passion for inclusion and diversity motivated him to become an advocate, working towards achieving social change for all people.

"I not only want to help people with disability to create change in their life, but also I want to change their mindsets around how our society perceives people with disability," he said.

'Everyone should be seen as equal'

Mr Basha is currently employed by radio station Nova FM, which he said was his dream job.

"My job at Nova and the people I work with have provided me with meaningful employment and this has given me independence, financial security and a sense of purpose," he said.

"Most importantly, I feel valued and respected as a contributing member of the team."

However, Mr Basha acknowledged opportunities to gain meaningful employment could be difficult to find.

Many people with disability felt rejected, he said, as organisations were often challenged by their support needs.

"What (organisations) may not realise is a lot of people with disability often come with support or solutions to help them overcome any challenges," he said.

"Organisations and businesses need to stop putting people in boxes and recognise that everyone has their own unique potential, to lose their fear of the unknown."

When asked whether he felt comfortable being an advocate for people with a disability, Mr Basha said he could not represent everyone who had Down syndrome.

"Like any human being, we are all different and have different needs, passions and interests," he said.

"But I like to think that ... me speaking out and sharing my story has helped others to think differently about how we perceive someone who happens to have Down syndrome.

"I want to continue to share my message across the world. There is still so much work to be done in raising awareness of the positive impacts and benefits of including people with disability in all aspects of our society and communities. This is a generational change that needs to take place now.

"My ultimate goal for humanity is, of course, that one day the word inclusion will not need to be used in the context of people because everyone should be seen as equal."

Removing 'systemic' barriers is key

Like Mr Basha, Alastair McEwin AM wants to achieve "systemic change in the lives of disabled people".

Formerly the national disability discrimination commissioner from July 2016 until April 2019, Mr McEwin has been appointed as a commissioner for the disability royal commission.

"To be appointed as a royal commissioner is a huge honour and comes with enormous responsibility. It is also quite different to anything I have done previously in the disability area," he said.

"I thrive on identifying issues, working out solutions to address those issues and then speaking out about them," Mr McEwin said.

"My drive for the work I do is, quite simply, to ensure that in the future, no disabled person has to experience discrimination or barriers to mainstream society in the same way I have experienced discrimination and barriers as a deaf person."

Over time, Mr McEwin said, his advocacy work had moved into the broader disability space.

"My lived experience is but one part of the diversity of disability. It is fundamentally important to me that disabled people collaborate to achieve change in a united way," he added.

In June 2019, Mr McEwin made the Queen's Birthday honours list and was appointed a member of the Order of Australia (AM), for significant service to people with disability.

Mr McEwin said it was a huge honour and surprise to be awarded the AM.

"I was humbled to receive it and I hope that this puts a spotlight on the very important issue of human rights for disabled people in Australia".



Federal Parliament's sexual harassment training for politicians will be one hour and optional

BY DANIEL ZIFFER

Posted Thu 15 Jul 2021 at 12:30am

Training to deal with sexual assault, bullying and harassment in Parliament will not happen until September at the earliest, will go for as little as an hour and will be optional for MPs.

The training was introduced after Liberal staffer Brittany Higgins alleged she was raped in the Parliament House office of then-defence minister Linda Reynolds. The matter is now the subject of a police investigation.

Tender documents seeking an organisation to "deliver training to promote a safe and respectful workplace" reveal details of the program.

'Option to attend'

Parliamentarians will be "given the option to attend" a one-hour face-to-face training session with office managers and chiefs of staff at Parliament House or in electorate offices.

Junior staff will be given a two-hour session that may become mandatory.

By the end of the session, managers and MPs should be able to understand "behaviours (that) do or do not constitute assault, sexual assault, sexual harassment and serious and systemic bullying and harassment".

They should also be able to understand workplace health and safety obligations as an employer and what is needed to "provide a safe and respectful workplace".

The training will use practical examples about how to prevent sexual assault, sexual harassment, and serious and systemic bullying, as well as how to support impacted people.

The hour-long session will also detail how to “respond appropriately to a disclosure” and give advice on “reporting options” for incidents.

Trainers told to prepare for learners with little awareness

An investigation into the environment of Parliament House in the wake of Ms Higgins’s alleged sexual assault, called the Review of the Parliamentary Workplace: Responding to Serious Incidents, proposed new ways of dealing with serious incidents.

Those proposed measures were a “trauma-informed support system”, an independent complaints mechanism and a face-to-face tailored workplace education program.

This tender is for the last element.

The people doing the training are told to prepare for a broad audience that may know little about occupational health and safety, sexual harassment or reporting incidents. Pilot sessions have already been held in parliamentary offices.

Trainers will be required to “demonstrate adaptability and flexibility, given differences across parliamentary offices and differing levels of awareness”: deliver information in a way that is “engaging, non-judgmental and sensitive to dynamics in the room” and present with “a demonstrated awareness of the parliamentary context”.

A statement from the Department of Finance confirmed the details of the training.

“Finance offers induction and ongoing training and support to parliamentarians and ... employees in relation to their work, health and safety obligations,” a spokesperson said. “These training modules include workplace bullying and harassment and guidance on sexual harassment.”

The statement went on to note the training was a recommendation from the Foster Report that was designed to “equip parliamentarians, managers and staff to understand their workplace health and safety responsibilities” and give them the tools to deal with unacceptable behaviour.

A number of offices, including the Prime Minister’s, have already participated in pilot training programs focusing on workplace safety.

The approach to market, seeking a company, closes on August 6. The contract will end almost a year later, on June 30, 2022.



Four out of five Australians with disability still without COVID-19 vaccine

BY JESSE NEILL

While much of the focus has been on whether the Federal Government will mandate vaccinations for disability support staff, recent data provided by the Department of Health reveals only 5,000 people living in disability care have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

The news comes more than four months into the national vaccine rollout and means less than one in five Australians living in a residential care setting have received both vaccinations.

People with Disability Australia President, Sam Connor, has muscular dystrophy, heart and lung issues and uses a wheelchair. Ms Connors secured her first dose of the Pfizer vaccine on Saturday.

However, speaking with AAP yesterday, Ms Connor described the vaccine rollout as a “debacle” for the disability community.

“We have been forgotten, omitted and disregarded in the biggest threat to us,” she says.

“We are the ones who are going to die from this and the fact that we don’t get spoken about, it feels really dehumanising.”

“Until everybody with a disability who requires care and support and who might be clinically vulnerable to the virus is vaccinated, then it’s not acceptable.”

Disability sector is left asking the same questions

The Federal Government originally announced that disability care residents and staff were meant to be vaccinated within six weeks of the rollout’s commencement in mid-February.

However, of the 27,000 National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants aged 16 and over living in shared homes, just over 40% have received one dose, while less than 20% have received both doses and are fully vaccinated.

Australian Greens Disability spokesperson, Senator Jordon Steele-John, says the Federal Government should have made a plan to vaccinate people with disability and disability support workers in April, when it was revealed that less than 10 percent had been vaccinated.

"I'm blown away by the contempt that the Morrison Government has shown for disabled people, our families and the people who support us to live a good life since the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic," Mr Steele-John says.

"Disabled people and carers were denied the COVID supplement back in March 2020 when many people's costs were significantly increased due to quarantine, lock down and COVID restrictions.

"Then, the Disability Royal Commission heard that the Morrison Government hadn't included disabled people in their emergency response plan for COVID-19."

The Government faced criticism in April this year when, without consultation, it shifted all resources to vaccinate aged care, despite Australians living in disability care also being in the highest priority group.

This led the Disability Royal Commission last month to declare the slow rollout of COVID vaccines into the disability sector an "abject failure".

"Here we are, almost a year later, asking the same questions about why disabled people get treated differently to other at-risk members of the community with regards to the vaccine rollout," Mr Steele-John says.

Government expects to ramp up vaccine supply to disability sector

Speaking alongside Health Minister Greg Hunt at a press conference in Melbourne yesterday, Commodore Eric Young, Operations Coordinator from the Vaccine Operations Centre, provided an update on the COVID-19 vaccine rollout.

Mr Young says the focus has been on aged care but expects to see increases in the number of vaccines reaching the disability sector.

"As we complete the residential aged care facilities, we will start to roll out vaccine service providers and continue ramping up the disability sector," Mr Young says.

"We now have 12,521 people with a disability in a residential setting having received at least one dose of vaccine.

"This week, like we do every week, we want to ensure that all eligible Australians know how and where to access a vaccine. And again, I point everyone to the Eligibility Checker on the Health website at health.gov.au, where they can access and we've had more than 12.9 million visits to that website."

"But today, like we do every single day, our focus is ensuring the vaccines we have are available across the country, where and when they're most needed, to protect more Australians."

Shadow Minister for the NDIS, Bill Shorten, says NDIS participants and disability care workers have been forgotten.

"There are thousands and thousands of people with disabilities for whom they've never been able to come out of isolation since COVID started because their workers haven't been vaccinated," Mr Shorten says.

"We might well end up with mandating vaccinations for disability workers, but at the moment, it's a pipe dream."

The Government is yet to make an announcement on whether home care workers will be included in the mandatory vaccination plan.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council to inform next National Plan to end family, domestic and sexual violence

The Morrison Government has established a 13-member Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council to inform the development of the next National Plan to end family, domestic and sexual violence in Australia and support the implementation of the Closing the Gap Target 13.

Indigenous rights campaigner Professor Sandra Creamer will be the interim chair of the multidisciplinary Advisory Council and be joined by advisors from across the health, community services, legal services, children and family services, and university sectors.

Minister for Women's Safety Anne Ruston said the Advisory Council would help ensure the issues and challenges facing First Nations peoples were elevated and given specific focus in the next National Plan.

"It is my absolute commitment, to not just hear but, to really listen to and respect the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women," Minister Ruston said.

"The diverse backgrounds and expertise of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council will ensure a genuine partnership as we work together to develop the next National Plan.

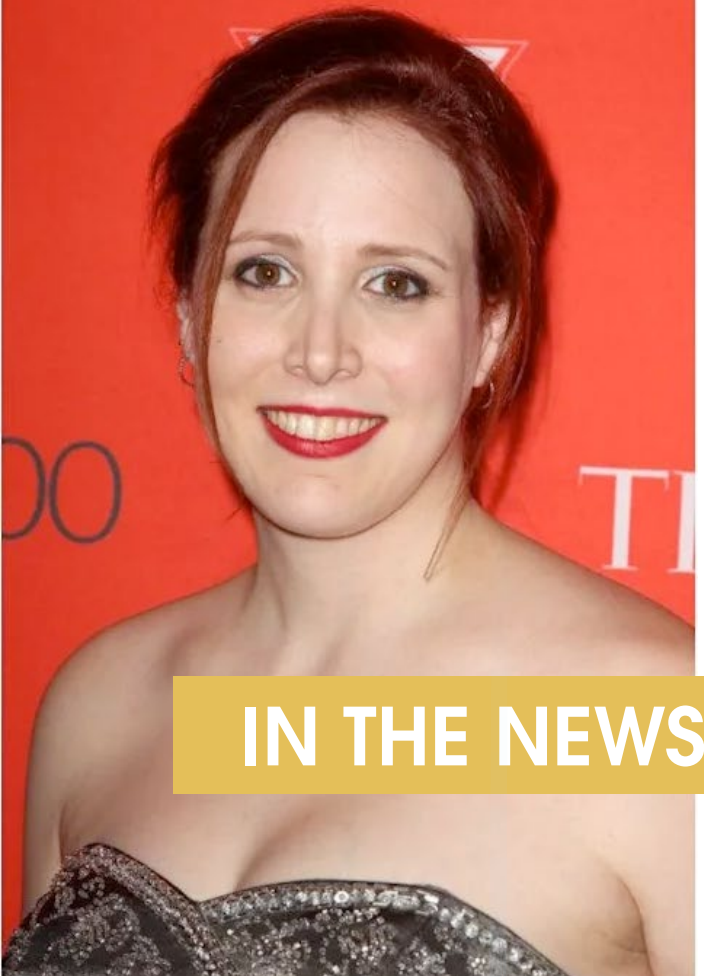
"Importantly, the advisors have a wealth of experience working on the ground in communities which will be vital to develop community-led solutions to on-the-ground challenges."

The Morrison Government made a \$1 million commitment in the 2021-22 Budget to establish and operate the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council over the next three years.

The advisors on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Advisory Council have been appointed for three years and include:

- Interim Chair: Professor Sandra Creamer AM – CEO, National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance
- Muriel Bamblett AO – CEO, Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency, and Co-chair, SNAICC, National Voice for our Children
- Shirleen Campbell – Coordinator, Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group
- Professor Bronwyn Carlson – Head of Department of Indigenous Studies, Macquarie University
- Emily Carter – CEO, Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre
- Susan Cook – Financial counsellor, Salvation Army, and Indigenous Consumer Assistance Network
- Fiona Cornforth – CEO, Healing Foundation
- Warren Smith – Program Manager and Supervisor of Darwin Indigenous Men's Service, Darwin Aboriginal and Islander Women's Shelter
- Professor Victoria Hovane – Psychologist and professor, Centre for Indigenous Peoples and Community Justice, University of Western Australia, and Australian Centre for Child Protection, University of South Australia
- Kelly Treloar – Disability Royal Commission Project Manager, First Peoples Disability Network
- Rachel Dunn – CEO, Karadi Aboriginal Corporation
- Geiza Stow – Board member, Mura Kosker (Torres Strait Islands)
- Robert Skeen – CEO, Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council and Chair, South Australia Aboriginal Community Controlled Network.

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Dylan Farrow says Bill Cosby and James Franco case outcomes are a 'travesty'

BY ELLIE HARRISON

Dylan Farrow has said the news about Bill Cosby and James Franco's respective sexual misconduct cases this week is a "travesty".

On Wednesday 30 June, Cosby's sexual assault conviction was overturned and James Franco reached a \$2.2m (£1.6m) settlement in his sexual misconduct lawsuit.

The adopted daughter of Woody Allen – who has accused the filmmaker of historical sexual abuse, which he denies – posted a lengthy message to Twitter expressing her disappointment at the two outcomes.

"For those who question myself and other survivors about the reasons and timing of coming forward, I hope that today will serve a teachable moment on empathy and why it takes years – if ever – for someone to discuss their abuse," Farrow wrote.

"Many survivors will look at the events of today and decide it's not worth it; that even when justice is served, it can be taken away."

She called the outcomes a "perfect example of how, not just our society, but our justice system continually fails survivors of sexual assault".

Farrow concluded: "Perpetrators see what has happened today and know their crimes will go unpunished. We need to see real, meaningful change in our system before we ever hope to achieve justice."

Cosby was freed on Wednesday after nearly three years in prison following a decision by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court to overturn his 2018 conviction on three charges of aggravated indecent assault.

The 83-year-old comedian and actor has long maintained his innocence in the case, which stems from an accusation that he drugged and had sex with a Temple University employee in 2004.

Franco and associated parties will reportedly pay a settlement of \$2,235,000 to resolve a lawsuit alleging that the actor coerced acting students into performing explicit sex scenes on camera.

Legal representatives for Franco originally responded to the misconduct claims, calling them "false and inflammatory".



Breaking Free is Blue Knot Foundation's monthly eNewsletter for survivors of childhood trauma, their supporters and community members. For feedback or to contribute, please email newsletter@blueknot.org.au or call (02) 8920 3611.

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