

PUBLIC STATEMENT

Released: 1 February 2018

Endorsed by: Women in the Arts Workplace Safety Meeting

This is a public statement by women, trans and non-binary people who work in the arts in South Australia. It has been endorsed by a public meeting to discuss workplace safety, held on 1st February 2018, at Vitalstatistix, Karna Country, Port Adelaide, South Australia.

This meeting has brought together artists and arts workers across multidisciplinary fields, including theatre, dance and contemporary performance, visual arts, music, writing, film, media, community-based arts, disability arts and other creative sectors.

We work in multiple spaces, including theatres, galleries, studios, concert halls and live music venues, online, on the streets, in schools and in hospitals, and in many other places throughout the South Australian community.

Some of us are artists, working independently or employed by arts organisations and other institutions; some of us are arts workers working within such organisations; some of us do many different roles, in order to make an income in what is increasingly a 'gig economy' in the arts in Australia.

We have gathered together to add our voices to the global and national #MeToo, #TimesUp and #MeNoMore movement. We too share the commonplace experience and effects of workplace sexual harassment and assault. We understand these experiences to be fundamentally based in the operation of power: the power to hire, fire, blacklist, intimidate, shame and otherwise threaten our economic, physical and emotional security. This power operates at all levels of the arts, from large institutions to small artist run groups. It intersects with discrimination and violence affecting First Nations artists, queer artists, artists with disability and other artistic communities.

We know that women, trans and non-binary artists and arts workers often experience the effects of assault, harassment, bullying, gaslighting, and predatory behaviour alone, too fearful of retaliation to complain and without workplace support structures that can protect us. Not only do these experiences have grave and lifelong consequences for individuals, every time these behaviours are ignored, excused and allowed to continue they contribute to a toxic culture in our industry.

To the South Australian arts sector, we say: time is up, here too.

We say: it is time for zero tolerance of sexual harassment, violence, entitlement, and sexist and transphobic behaviours and language.

We say: the arts are not special and there is never a circumstance where someone should feel unsafe or silenced in the creation of art.

We say: we 100% support and believe the brave people who have reported their experiences, whether publicly, privately or anonymously.

We call on the organisations, funding bodies and individuals who make up the South Australian arts sector to commit to ensuring that our workplaces are safe for everyone; and that all workplaces implement workplace safety policies and procedures, and codes of

behaviour, which aim to prevent abuses of power and that immediately deal with any reports of violent, predatory or sexist behaviour.

We ask the arts sector to consider the deep and long-term effects that these experiences create, and that organisations implement mental health and well-being strategies as part of new policies and procedures.

As we move into the festival season in South Australia, we call on festivals, venues, producers/presenters and artists to ensure that artists and other workers, and audiences, are provided with safety and inclusivity.

We congratulate Arts South Australia for their announcement today that from 1 March 2018, the development and implementation of workplace anti-bullying and anti-harassment policy and procedure will be a mandatory clause in all its funding agreements.

We ask the arts sector to actively work for the removal of the stigma, shame, fear and workplace vulnerability that prevents the reporting of harassment, assault and sexist behaviour. We call on our colleagues and peers to embrace the cultural change and leadership that is required to fully deal with this scourge in our sector.

We stand in solidarity with women, trans and non-binary people who are working for workplace safety in all fields, not only the arts. We ask men to listen, believe, act, speak up, be non-complicit and stand beside us.

Women, trans and non-binary artists and arts workers are hardworking, passionate, dedicated, skilled and essential contributors to the arts in South Australia. To quote the #MeNoMore statement by the Australian music industry, "In the face of uncountable discrimination, harassment, violence, and the general menace of sexist jargon, we have gritted our teeth and gotten on with the job."

We will no longer be silent in fear and just get on with the job. We will work across the arts, and in our sub-sectors, to ensure workplace safety and respect, and for justice and adequate support for victims and survivors.

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