

Dear Toni,

I am responding to your email of Thursday 9th May 9:38am. I understand you have a job to do. With respect, our hope is you take the time to properly investigate these allegations before reporting. Additionally, there really is insufficient time to respond to every single question and our hope is to move forward and get back to promoting the cause to end sexual violence.

We are all truly gutted and devastated to hear about these accusations. We understand the source is volunteers who left our organisation in 2023. At the time we offered an externally facilitated mediation to work through any issues they raised but they declined. To go straight to the media, and particularly the timing being after *What Were You Wearing* hit the headlines in relation to the rally and the Prime Minister, is beyond disappointing not just for me, but for all the victims and their families who have been affected by sexual violence.

From the outset we wish to be very open and transparent and say while *What Were You Wearing* has always and only ever acted in good faith for the cause of ending sexual violence.

As background, *What Were You Wearing* (WWYW) was founded in 2021 when Sarah was 20 years old and it became incorporated in 2022. Over the space of 12 months, WWYW catapulted into the spotlight very quickly, with many survivors and allies signing up as the organisation was unique and offered a way for survivors to put their pain into passion.

I have always been open and frank in acknowledging that starting WWYW at such a young age meant I did not have the knowledge or skills of a CEO or business owner. Despite this, we have always been up to date and adhered to our reporting/financial obligations and relevant insurances.

The rapid growth and expansion in such a short period of time was exciting; however as with any new organisation, it did present some issues. The structure was not truly set up to manage the influx of volunteers and combined with having no paid staff meant it was a struggle to get everything done in an efficient manner.

I recognised that I needed more skills and more help. I have personally invested time in undertaking further training and mentorship and have completed the Female Founders Program I2N, EmpowerHER (6–8 month leadership program), various mentorships, and completed trauma informed training. We now have a growing management team that can be consulted and assist with the day-to-day operations of WWYW. As a result, WWYW is a different organisation today.

These accusations are hurtful. We feel disrespected about the personal questions of our identity. I am a proud Awabakal woman myself and our organisation is Indigenous led. We haven't and would never ignore cultural advice as that is a part of our identity and have always adhered to our mob's correct protocols.

We have always been transparent about the money raised by WWYW which is put towards our services, survivor healing groups, festival/venue safe spaces, survivor packs, our continued advocacy and help in obtaining counselling for survivors. We communicate this regularly at our fundraising events.

We vehemently deny asking donors to pay any additional funds for 'late' payments and cannot even fathom where this is coming from.

Our volunteers have always been treated with respect and like with many volunteer organisations non-disclosure, confidentiality and policy review and signing is all part of the induction process.

We have many volunteers who love being part of our organisation. Here's what just one of our volunteers had to say. "Since joining WWYW I have had nothing but positive experiences, especially with Sarah, the founder. She has welcomed me into the team and her and the entire team have made me feel welcome, safe, and secure. I have been with the organisation for over a year and have never witnessed nor experienced any bullying, harassment, or anything of that nature within the organisation or from any of the current team members", R.

Coming off the back of the Albanese situation and 40 media talks and interviews, I was completely drained and emotional. I was speaking to a journalist and his victim blaming and lack of sensitivity was a tipping point and I admit I did swear. It wasn't my finest moment, but I had tried to hold it together after everything that happened. I am not a robot and if not swearing was a prerequisite for being a CEO, I doubt we would have many left.

Our impact on the community has been incredible as we are now united with many Australians in the cause to end ending sexual violence. Our recent rallies saw over 100,000 people come together and gain a voice from our actions. We have been trusted with over 26,000 stories from victim-survivors, our Survivor Healing Groups book out most months with many returning participants. We have contributed to law reform with the ACT on mandatory security cameras for licensed premises and were integral in amending the NSW RSA to include drink spiking prevention training.

I personally live with multiple disabilities and am aware that, like myself, people with disabilities are disproportionately affected by sexual and domestic violence which is why we shine a light on this.

It is disheartening and disappointing that accusations by former and disgruntled members of our organisation is getting more airtime than the real issues around domestic and sexual violence. Like many other organisations our goal is to spread awareness and help end sexual violence. Far too many women have lost their lives to domestic and sexual violence this year and there is so much more work to be done in this space.

Our service is essential, and we will continue to grow and fight to end sexual violence.