



## Episode 7: Aunty Muriel Bamblett

### Transcript

#### **Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

[instrumental music plays] We need to start today with today's children and young people. It's about respectful relationships. It's about educating our children and young people, 'cause they'll be the leaders of our future. They can be the change-makers.

#### **Female voiceover**

Welcome to Voices Towards 2050: Ending Gender-Based Violence, the official podcast series of the Domestic, Family and Sexual Violence Commission. Please be aware that this podcast discusses topics related to domestic, family and sexual violence, which may be distressing for some listeners. Support is available. If you need assistance, please contact 1800RESPECT or reach out to your local support services. Thank you for joining us.

#### **Micaela Cronin**

So I'm really pleased to welcome my guest on today's episode of the podcast, a dear and very wise friend. Muriel, thanks for joining me for this conversation about our hopes for the future.

#### **Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

Yeah. Thanks, Michaela, for having me.

#### **Micaela Cronin**

Firstly, I want to start by acknowledging that today I'm on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nations where I live, and pay my deep respects to their elders, past and present for their care of these lands and for their generosity and wisdom. My commitment is to work and live as an ally, both in this role and always. Muriel, you're a proud and revered Aboriginal elder, both here and Victoria and across Australia. I feel very fortunate to have worked alongside you for many years now, and I've learnt a great deal from you and I continue to do so every time we talk. You are currently active in an unbelievable number of advisory groups, Muriel, including you're currently the co-chair of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Steering Committee developing the standalone National Family Safety Plan. You're chairperson of SNAICC, the peak body representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and family services nationally. The Aboriginal Treaty working group here in Victoria, the Victorian Children's Council, just to name a few.

#### **Micaela Cronin**

You've been recognized throughout your career with many various significant in- awards, including the Order of Australia, and as NAIDOC Person of the Year last year. You've also been made an adjunct professor in social work, uh, and social policy at La Trobe University, and awarded an honorary doctor of letters in social work at the University of Sydney for all of your work. Throughout all of this, Muriel, you've also led and grown quite phenomenally in impact, VACCA, uh, the Victorian Aboriginal Child and Community Agency. An- an incredible body of work, Muriel. We are indebted to you for all that you've done through and continue to do throughout your career. I don't know how you manage to juggle all of those things.

#### **Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

I think, um, having a great family, I mean, I've had... been blessed to be, um... have a great mother and father that worked very hard. Both of them came off mission to reserves. So, um, also, you know, having my children, um, really sort of be, uh, an inspiration to me. My siblings, I've got eight siblings, and so I think being grown up and, and developed by an Aboriginal community, having aunts, uncles, not having been removed, I think I've been very, very fortunate.



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### **Micaela Cronin**

Mm-hmm. Well, we're, we're very fortunate to have the wisdom that you bring, and I love listening to you talk about your family. And particularly your grandkids, um, listening and sharing and, and thinking about the future for our children. So, Muriel, tell me what motivates you. I think you've already touched on it, but tell me what motivates you to strive for a different future.

### **Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

I think it's the... because of the inequity that ex- exists in Australia. Um, for me, I just really want to pursue equity of access to services available for, um, our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women. And I think our women don't feel that they have equity of access and many of our women won't go to the helping services many of our men want. And so it is about, you know, for me, it is about being able to, you know, have our families access those services, but also of the services being receptive and being able to support them and be able to feel that, you know, that we're changing the direction. And for me, it's about building respect for our people in the service system. I think the one big thing is that our little girls of today are able to grow up into strong women of the future because of the work we're doing today. I want to not have our young boys grow up to know that they need to respect women and, and, and it's not because they... they're obligated. Because it's something that they feel good about, not feel that they're pressured to and it takes away anything from them as young men and young boys.

### **Micaela Cronin**

Mm-hmm. Absolutely. A- and look, that's what's really motivated me to do this podcast, to think about girls and boys who are born today. So it's the national, the national plan, both the national plan to end gender-based violence and the family safety plan that you are leading and working on at the moment are, are looking to a vision in one generation where we have been successful. So those boys and girls for the, for them, if we, if we are successful in, in our efforts today, what do you think... What's your vision for a generation from now? What would 2050 look like?

### **Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

Look, I think our aspirations have to be really, really big. We have to have a call for action. We really do need to make sure that, um, we've got... that women and children and victims, we've changed the language, I think. Our people, you know, that go through this are survivors. And so I think the language has to change from victims. It has to be surr-... survivors. And that, for, for me, it's a vision built on that, you know, that there is the resources and the supports that are there in a way that people are able to navigate. I would love for there to be an Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander women's leadership approach in our communities, but not to see as our leadership as somebody that's a CEO positional power. It is about leadership on, you know, changing the things in families. And s- I think it's important that we see our women's position, you know, participation also in positions of power. The fact that we've got so many Aboriginal women in politics is amazing. But, you know, obviously, we have to have opportunities for equal pay wherever our people live, not just in the cities and towns. It's a terrible indictment that so many of our women in local communities don't have opportunity, that there's so much poverty. And so, how do we build into those communities opportunities for women to be able to, um, have economic independent, not be dependent on, you know, social security or Centrelink payments or the BasicsCard. And so, I think we also, you know, need to make sure that there are women's services wherever our women live, that there are neighbourhood houses in remote communities on our missions and reserves. And I think we need to shift the system and power dynamics that create, um, gender inequality, particularly in our Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander communities. Because they're certainly many, uh, communities, it's very, very much male dominated. And, and a lot of our women don't believe that they can change those systems and processes. And we need to be able to create hope for. I think we need to start today as well with today's children and young people. It's about respectful relationships. It's about educating our children and young people. Because as we spoke about, they'll be the leaders of our future. They can be the change makers. And I believe it does start with them. It starts with our children now, and it has to be about changing the way, uh, we teach them in the school, the way they learn in their family home. And we have to be able to create a better future for them.

**Micaela Cronin**

Muriel, I think that point about leadership and the leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women through, through many thousands of generations now, that, that unbroken line of leadership in this country that we don't learn enough from. And the impact of colonization on breaking that down, but we do see phenomenal leadership, as you say, in families and communities. And wanting to see more of that and, and cherish and value and nurture that is something that I see in the communities that, that I've engaged with more, I think, in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities than I've seen anywhere else. So, I absolutely agree with you. I think that's, that's part of where the seeds of the future are. So, sa- say all of this has been successful and you get to travel through time to the vision, your vision, of 2050, one generation away, and spend a few days there. What would you want to know? What would you go looking for? What questions would you have?

**Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

I think I would want to know what worked and how do we keep doing it. I, I don't think we're going to come up with the absolute an- answer, but I think we will see, you know, the seeds of the plants that we're sowing today, I think we'll see those things start to mature and I think we'll see, um, policies that are working to keep women safe, that there are, you know, leaders, there are champions, there are processes, there are things like healing centres, women and men engaging in change, I think. We will see systems that will hold abuses to account and be much stronger in being able to report, not hiding it away. I think we will build community safety approaches to address community violence. I believe we will have better supports in place for w- women survivors and for victims when they decide to leave. I think we've got the beginning. It has to be around changing the imagery and putting positive imagery and of changing the role of women. And also, putting up and promoting men who do the right thing. Not always just pointing to men who do, um, perpetrate violence or... and the, the media and everybody is always about putting up really all the bad things that men do. And I think somehow, we've gotta be able to put really good imagery up about the men that are doing really well. I remember an image I saw of a, we were doing parenting posters, and there was an Aboriginal man. He was a really big, bulky, uh, you know, muscly man, and he was putting a ribbon on this little girl's hair-

**Micaela Cronin**

Mm-hmm. Yeah

**Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

... and it just gave a really good message, and I think that's what we need to create. But I think if I travel, I want to see that our little girls of today have grown into strong women of the future because of the work that we're doing today, that they are, you know, have been able to tell these stories of survival, but also tell of the things that they've changed in order to get to 2050.

**Micaela Cronin**

Yeah. Absolutely beautiful way to describe it, Muriel. And I think one of the things we absolutely hear all the time, isn't it, is that stuff about young men need positive imagery about what it means to be a good man, how to find themselves, and, and the diversity of what that looks like. It looks different for different communities.

**Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

Absolutely. Yep.

**Micaela Cronin**

So, you've gone into the future, you've seen all of those things and asked your questions. You've come back. What's the one thing that you would imagine from, from your perspective, it's not the only thing absolutely we know it's gonna be more than one thing, that will change this? But what's the one thing you would do if you had the ability to make any necessary change that you'd, would do-

**Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

Yep



**Micaela Cronin**

... right now that you would think that would really help us drive towards a violence-free 2050?

**Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

Well, I'm big on systems change and I think that we really do need to start to challenge where the violence begins. Obviously understanding poverty, housing homelessness, all of those, childcare and how that impacts on violence, how, you know, women not being employed or having even prospects of having a career, I think we've got to change, really sort of work at that. But I also want to challenge the issue of whiteness and thinking that our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women are less than. I think that-

**Micaela Cronin**

Hmm

**Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

... from, from my point of view, because I see a lot of the incidents of violence that come through our organization, and quite often it's non-Aboriginal men perpetrating violence on our women. And so, what is it about our women? Also, we know in the past, a lot of people stay away from dealing with Aboriginal violence because they are unaware, and what we need to do is create greater awareness of what is Aboriginal family violence and that any form of violence against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women shouldn't be tolerated and it should be everybody's business, most... not just Aboriginal peoples'. So I think I would love it if we were able to change men's perception of what is violence and really change the predatory behaviour that exists out there and how, how men... They don't just target one particular partner-

**Micaela Cronin**

Mm-hmm

**Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

... they move on and they don't change their behaviour.

**Micaela Cronin**

Yeah.

**Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

So being able to change those behaviours. To be able to get community ar- I think for me the critical point is around having Aboriginal communities stand up against violence. Quite often, we know it's happening, but we don't know how to respond, we don't know how to deal with it. We don't want to go to the police, but we want the violence to stop. So what we need to do is come up with community approaches to stop the violence, because the violence will continue if we don't have community-based approaches.

**Micaela Cronin**

So Muriel, you've given me one thing at multiple levels-

**Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

[laughs]

**Micaela Cronin**

... and I, and I'm, and I'm really... But you're right. It will take all of those one things.

**Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

[laughs]

**Micaela Cronin**

It will take systems change. It will take communities themselves changing. It will take addressing the impact of racism in this country. Muriel, thank you so much for your time today. I think you've really shared some



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incredibly powerful insights with us and I look forward to the work that you are leading with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Steering Committee in developing the Stand alone National Family Safety Plan.

**Aunty Muriel Bamblett**

Thank you very much. Thanks for having me, Kayla. [instrumental music]

**Female voiceover**

Thank you for listening to Voices Towards 2050: Ending Gender-Based Violence. Subscribe and join us for future conversations as we work together to achieve a future free from domestic, family, and sexual violence. To learn more about the Commission, visit our website at [dfsvc.gov.au](https://dfsvc.gov.au). If you need support, contact 1800RESPECT or call 1800-737-732. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, you can call 13YARN or 139276. The views expressed in this podcast are those of the guests and do not necessarily represent the views of the Australian Government or the Commission. [music]

[End transcript]