



Episode 18: Ged Kearney

Transcript

00:00:00,300 --> 00:00:03,600 [Micaela Cronin]

Hello everyone, and welcome back to Voices Towards 2050.

00:00:04,740 --> 00:00:36,640 [Micaela Cronin]

This season, we're taking a deeper dive into discussing different perspectives, experiences, and solutions from people across the country, exploring the key question: What will it take to end domestic, family, and sexual violence in a generation? Conversations like these inform the strategic advice we provide to governments to help strengthen policy, practice, and the coordinated efforts needed to drive real change. We're pleased to return in 2026 with an important first episode featuring a guest the commission works closely with.

00:00:37,800 --> 00:00:42,340 [Micaela Cronin]

I hope you enjoy this year's episodes of Voices Towards 2050.

00:00:42,340 --> 00:01:02,740 [Ged Kearney]

[music] People always say to you, or people did say to me, "You know, I didn't think someone like you, Ged, would have put up with that." And I think that's another attitude that comes through strongly, that whole why didn't you just leave, or why did you put up with it, or why didn't you tell him to bugger off? It's just so different when you're in the situation, and it can happen to anyone, of course, we all know.

00:01:02,740 --> 00:01:03,240 [Micaela Cronin]

Yep.

00:01:03,240 --> 00:01:06,010 [Ged Kearney]

And it doesn't matter about your postcode or your-

00:01:06,010 --> 00:01:06,060 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah

00:01:06,060 --> 00:01:07,679 [Ged Kearney]

... education level, anything.

00:01:14,180 --> 00:01:41,280 [Female Voiceover]

[music] Welcome to Voices Towards 2050, 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 one eight hundred Respect or reach out to your local support services. Thank you for joining us.

00:01:45,200 --> 00:01:56,780 [Micaela Cronin]

So I'm very pleased to welcome today's episode of the podcast, the Honorable Ged Kearney, Assistant Minister for Social Services and Assistant Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. Welcome, Ged.

00:01:56,780 --> 00:01:58,820 [Ged Kearney]

Thank you very much for having me, Michela.

00:01:58,820 --> 00:02:28,280 [Micaela Cronin]



So I want to begin by acknowledging that I am making this recording today from the lands of the Wadawurrung people of the Kulin Nation. I'm really very-- I always feel very grounded when I am here at home, and I feel very honored to live on these lands. I want to pay my respects to Aboriginal elders and people on these lands and across Aus-Australia, and my commitment is to work as an ally in this role and always. So Ged-

00:02:28,280 --> 00:02:28,300 [Ged Kearney]

Yes.

00:02:28,300 --> 00:02:30,860 [Micaela Cronin]

Geredine Mary, Ged Kearney.

00:02:30,860 --> 00:02:31,000 [Ged Kearney]

[laughs]

00:02:31,000 --> 00:02:43,180 [Micaela Cronin]

I'm, I'm gonna embarrass you and do a brief introduction before we get started on the podcast. I don't think many people listening will need an introduction, but I'm just gonna share a little bit of your bio, if that's okay.

00:02:43,180 --> 00:02:43,760 [Ged Kearney]

Sure.

00:02:43,760 --> 00:02:45,460 [Micaela Cronin]

Geredine Mary Ged Kearney-

00:02:45,460 --> 00:02:46,060 [Ged Kearney]

[laughs]

00:02:46,060 --> 00:02:46,320 [Micaela Cronin]

Was born-

00:02:46,320 --> 00:02:48,320 [Ged Kearney]

Nobody calls me Geredine Mary. [laughs]

00:02:48,320 --> 00:02:59,850 [Micaela Cronin]

Do you know what's very funny? I always-- When I saw that your name was Geredine, I've only ever met one other Geredine, and it made me smile. And whenever anyone says my full name like that, I feel like I'm about to get into trouble.

00:02:59,850 --> 00:03:01,040 [Ged Kearney]

That's right. [laughs]

00:03:01,040 --> 00:03:05,240 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah, exactly. So you grew up in Richmond.

00:03:05,240 --> 00:03:05,520 [Ged Kearney]

Yes.

00:03:05,520 --> 00:03:08,300 [Micaela Cronin]

Raised in a large working-class family.

00:03:08,300 --> 00:03:08,380 [Ged Kearney]

Mm-hmm.

00:03:08,380 --> 00:03:10,540 [Micaela Cronin]



Second youngest of nine.

00:03:10,540 --> 00:03:11,720 [Ged Kearney]

Yes, that's right.

00:03:11,720 --> 00:03:17,520 [Micaela Cronin]

That, that says something. That's a whole nother conversation about what you learn about being part of such a big tribe.

00:03:17,520 --> 00:03:18,130 [Ged Kearney]

Mm-hmm.

00:03:18,130 --> 00:03:18,160 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah.

00:03:18,160 --> 00:03:19,260 [Ged Kearney]

Indeed.

00:03:19,260 --> 00:03:26,510 [Micaela Cronin]

So you initially studied economics at Monash before pivoting to training as a registered nurse, qualifying-

00:03:26,510 --> 00:03:27,400 [Ged Kearney]

Oh, my goodness

00:03:27,400 --> 00:03:33,760 [Micaela Cronin]

... in nineteen eighty-five and later completed a Bachelor of Education. So you've enjoyed study, it sounds like.

00:03:33,760 --> 00:03:36,350 [Ged Kearney]

Uh, you've gone very deep into my background. [laughs]

00:03:36,350 --> 00:03:44,739 [Micaela Cronin]

[laughs] Well, it's-- I think it's really-- That's an interesting mix of things, economics, nursing, which you talk about-

00:03:44,740 --> 00:03:45,230 [Ged Kearney]

Yes

00:03:45,230 --> 00:04:02,820 [Micaela Cronin]

... and, and education, all of that, all of that which you bring, bring to this role and, and, and the other work that you've done. So what many people will know, will, will know you from is that you've been an elected member of the Australian House of Representatives since March twenty eighteen.

00:04:02,820 --> 00:04:03,380 [Ged Kearney]

Yes.

00:04:03,380 --> 00:04:17,880 [Micaela Cronin]

Originally representing what was the division of Batman before the seat was renamed to Cooper. Your maiden speech, so we have gone deep, was advocating for humane refugee policy in Australia and called for an end to-

00:04:17,880 --> 00:04:17,890 [Ged Kearney]

Mm-hmm

00:04:17,890 --> 00:04:20,500 [Micaela Cronin]



... offshore detention of asylum seekers. I don't know.

00:04:20,500 --> 00:04:20,660 [Ged Kearney]

Mm-hmm.

00:04:20,660 --> 00:04:33,840 [Micaela Cronin]

You and I haven't talked about this. I was part of-- We-- When I was at MacKillop Family Services, we were part of implementing when it did move to bringing onshore asylum seekers. So we've had a shared passion-

00:04:33,840 --> 00:04:33,850 [Ged Kearney]

Yeah

00:04:33,850 --> 00:04:35,040 [Micaela Cronin]

... for that. Yeah.

00:04:35,040 --> 00:04:35,580 [Ged Kearney]

Mm-hmm.

00:04:35,580 --> 00:05:00,120 [Micaela Cronin]

You've been reelected, so three further times, twenty- twenty nineteen, twenty twenty-two, and more-- most recently last year, twenty twenty-five. And across every role, Ged, it's very clear that you've had a strong and consistent focus on advocating for women and vulnerable communities, which has been demonstrated across all of the roles leading up to that. As president of the Australian Council of Trade Unions-

00:05:00,120 --> 00:05:00,460 [Ged Kearney]

Mm-hmm

00:05:00,460 --> 00:05:08,469 [Micaela Cronin]

... as a founding member of the Climate and Health Alliance, advocate for recognizing climate change as a public health issue.

00:05:08,469 --> 00:05:08,700 [Ged Kearney]

Mm-hmm.

00:05:08,700 --> 00:05:51,099 [Micaela Cronin]

And, and now in your role as Assistant Minister for Prevention of Family Violence. What prompted us to have this conversation today, Ged, was that your recent article, you recently published and shared your personal experiences of coercive control. And I wanna start by both thanking you for doing that. I think for anybody and-- that shares their story, and the one consistent theme from everybody who's both shared their story with me individually across a much broader platform, such as you have, is always doing that to try and ensure that other people don't have to experience what they have, to, to make the world a better place, basically.

00:05:51,100 --> 00:05:55,820 [Ged Kearney]

I did want to share it, but I have to say, Michela, that I sat on it for a long time.

00:05:55,820 --> 00:05:56,500 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm.

00:05:56,500 --> 00:06:02,980 [Ged Kearney]

And for all sorts of reasons, I was worried about is this about me? This is not about me.

00:06:02,980 --> 00:06:03,020 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm, mm.



00:06:03,020 --> 00:06:08,900 [Ged Kearney]

But, but I was really quite worried about the response of the perpetrator-

00:06:08,960 --> 00:06:09,070 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm

00:06:09,070 --> 00:06:30,580 [Ged Kearney]

... and was actually very nervous after the article was published as well. I had a little bit of PTSD because every-- I thought around every corner-He would turn up, and there would be consequences for me telling that story. And I was anxious and nervous. I can even feel the anxiety in me now as I'm telling you this.

00:06:30,580 --> 00:06:30,700 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah.

00:06:30,700 --> 00:06:43,100 [Ged Kearney]

But what was amazingly empowering and wonderful and, and was the response. So many women reached out to me after that and said, "Oh, my God, that is exactly, um, what happened to me"

00:06:43,100 --> 00:06:43,110 [Micaela Cronin]

Oh.

00:06:43,110 --> 00:06:46,640 [Ged Kearney]

"Or that is my life right now. You are describing my life."

00:06:46,640 --> 00:06:46,960 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah.

00:06:46,960 --> 00:07:48,720 [Ged Kearney]

Um, there were... You know, the, the response was overwhelming really from women who were telling me, "Thank you, Ged, for saying that out loud because, you know, I want to say my story out loud, too." So many women hold it in and hold it back, and it's something that isn't spoken about, particularly the whole issue of coercive control because so many people would say, "Well, you know, he doesn't hit you, does he? He's not a violent man." And at first, I accepted that. I thought, "Oh, yeah. Well, maybe I'm lucky." But then as time went on in that relationship, I realised, no, this is, this is not healthy for me. This is not right. This relationship is very toxic. And a lot of women said they recognised in my story, they recognised what was happening in their relationship, and they knew then, having read my story, and, and many other women who've shared, that, yes, this is why I'm feeling that there's something wrong here. And it's not just me, and I'm not lucky, in fact. So yeah, it, it was, um, it was quite an interesting experience telling that story.

00:07:48,720 --> 00:08:00,900 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah. It sounds like a real, a real journey, Ged, both in reaching... I, I, I can resonate, and I know a lot of other people can, that issue about this is not about me, you know. When is it the right time to share-

00:08:00,900 --> 00:08:01,110 [Ged Kearney]

Mm-hmm

00:08:01,110 --> 00:08:15,380 [Micaela Cronin]

... your story? And then the very real reaction to what it does in terms of bringing up, bringing back, and I think bringing back what, what the feelings were and what, what your, your point about having a bit of PTSD-

00:08:15,380 --> 00:08:15,670 [Ged Kearney]

Yes



00:08:15,670 --> 00:08:18,519 [Micaela Cronin]

... afterwards. There's no such thing as a bit of PTSD.

00:08:18,520 --> 00:08:18,780 [Ged Kearney]

No. [laughs]

00:08:18,780 --> 00:08:20,660 [Micaela Cronin]

It really has a big impact on you.

00:08:20,660 --> 00:08:49,839 [Ged Kearney]

Mm. It does, and, you know, that whole sense of, you know, when you're in a coercive control relationship, the, the h- the consequences, you know. And when you do do something, and you know that there will be consequences, but you do it anyway. It might be something as small as visiting my mother or inviting my sisters over for lunch or, you know, doing something that I knew broke outside the boundaries or spending money that wasn't agr- you know, agreed to-

00:08:49,840 --> 00:08:50,050 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah

00:08:50,050 --> 00:09:01,220 [Ged Kearney]

... me spending that money on. And there was many, many other examples. They're just some that come to mind now. I would know that there would be consequences, and that was always that dreadful feeling that you had to face that-

00:09:01,220 --> 00:09:01,230 [Micaela Cronin]

Oh

00:09:01,230 --> 00:09:07,020 [Ged Kearney]

... afterwards when you got home. And yeah, it was, uh... I've had a little bit of that, [laughs]

00:09:07,020 --> 00:09:07,029 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah

00:09:07,029 --> 00:09:23,270 [Ged Kearney]

... that feeling, um, after ha- knowing the story was out there. So yeah, it was, it was really quite a hard time afterwards, not diminishing the experiences of other women out there right now who are going through that. I just want them to know that I understand what they're feeling.

00:09:23,270 --> 00:09:40,020 [Micaela Cronin]

And I think it's incredibly powerful for someone in a leadership role like you have to both share what your experiences have been, but what it's like to talk about it now. Because understanding that that's what we're asking of people when we ask them to keep telling their story, whether it's-

00:09:40,020 --> 00:09:40,050 [Ged Kearney]

Mm-hmm

00:09:40,050 --> 00:09:49,430 [Micaela Cronin]

... privately or publicly to inform policy and service design, that it has a cost. There's a cost to choosing to share the story.

00:09:49,430 --> 00:10:03,180 [Ged Kearney]

There really is, and I think, you know, we recognise that. And, you know, thanks to your advocacy and a lot of people out there that, you know, it's, it's those stories that really do influence policy. A woman should only have to tell her story once.



00:10:03,180 --> 00:10:03,620 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm. Mm.

00:10:03,620 --> 00:10:28,040 [Ged Kearney]

And I think hopefully people are seeing that that is coming through in some of our policy responses now. It is traumatic. I'm feeling a little bit traum- traumatised [laughs] right now telling it again. I don't know why. But, uh, yeah, so we, we do understand that, Michaela. And, and I know you've always been so incredibly strong in making sure that victim survivor's voices are heard in our policy development, and here's a prime example of why that is real and true.

00:10:28,040 --> 00:10:28,530 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm.

00:10:28,530 --> 00:10:28,720 [Ged Kearney]

Mm.

00:10:28,720 --> 00:10:51,820 [Micaela Cronin]

It is. Uh, it is, and you always listen in such a genuine way. And I think the other lesson in that is, for all of us, is not to assume that we know what people are bringing into any conversation with them and to be respectful of that. And that you have brought that knowledge and experience to all of the work that you've done and clearly to the passion that you bring for this role.

00:10:51,820 --> 00:11:00,620 [Ged Kearney]

You know, it's, it's funny. People always say to you, or people did say to me, "You know, I didn't think someone like you, Ged, would have put up with that." And I think that's another-

00:11:00,620 --> 00:11:00,720 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm

00:11:00,720 --> 00:11:13,900 [Ged Kearney]

... attitude that comes through strongly where, what, that whole, why didn't you just leave, or why did you put up with it, or why didn't you tell him to bugger off? It's just so different when you're in the situation, and it can happen to anyone, of course. We all know.

00:11:13,900 --> 00:11:14,380 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah.

00:11:14,380 --> 00:11:17,020 [Ged Kearney]

And it doesn't matter about your postcode or your-

00:11:17,020 --> 00:11:17,180 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah

00:11:17,180 --> 00:11:36,080 [Ged Kearney]

... education level, anything. And you f- it's kind of insidious. You find yourself over time making excuses. This is normal, my fault, and it just creeps up on you. And it gets to a, though for me, I don't know for other people, but for me, it got to a point where

00:11:37,220 --> 00:11:49,580 [Ged Kearney]

I, I did realise through a lot of interventions from, you know, when things got worse and the coercion got worse, and I was more and more under control, his control, where my family actually said to me, "What the hell, Ged," you know?

00:11:49,580 --> 00:11:50,500 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm. Mm.



00:11:50,500 --> 00:12:02,840 [Ged Kearney]

And I was lucky. I had a great deal of family support and love, and the village came around me. And I was able to leave. Although, I must say, the one and only time there was any violence was when I left.

00:12:04,100 --> 00:12:17,520 [Ged Kearney]

And that's quite interesting because you do hear that that is, you know, the statistics show that one of the most dangerous times for a woman is when she announces or she tries to leave. So I understand that as well.

00:12:17,520 --> 00:12:17,720 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah.

00:12:17,720 --> 00:12:18,260 [Ged Kearney]

Mm.

00:12:18,260 --> 00:13:15,475 [Micaela Cronin]

Thank you so much for sharing that and for being prepared to make yourself makes you vulnerable, sharing like that in a whole lot of ways, and it-- and as you say, even now talking about it, so I really wanna acknowledge that, um, and thank you for doing that. One of the things that I was really interested reading the article was that, and, and I know we've talked about this a lot in terms of your portfolio and your responsibility around promoting healthy masculinities. And one of the things you talk about in the article is pretty quickly turning to men and boys as a priority area for action, and, and what we need to be thinking and doing in that space. Because on the one hand, you're very clear and, and firm about it wasn't your responsibility. It isn't any woman's responsibility when they're experiencing that violence. But we also need to be thinking about how do we work differently with men and boys. What have you been thinking about, about that since you've started in this role?

00:13:15,476 --> 00:13:16,716 [Ged Kearney]

So much. [laughs]

00:13:16,716 --> 00:13:17,296 [Micaela Cronin]

Yes.

00:13:17,296 --> 00:13:23,496 [Ged Kearney]

So much. [laughs] This, you know, this is an enormous part of solving the problem-

00:13:23,496 --> 00:13:23,506 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm

00:13:23,506 --> 00:13:27,396 [Ged Kearney]

... is working with men and boys, and there's a lot of wonderful work happening, Michela-

00:13:27,396 --> 00:13:27,405 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm

00:13:27,405 --> 00:13:28,856 [Ged Kearney]

... which you know-

00:13:28,856 --> 00:13:29,326 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah, it is

00:13:29,326 --> 00:13:52,606 [Ged Kearney]

... uh, out there, and there's a lot of great interventions underway because growing healthy young men and, well, growing healthy men and boys is definitely part of the answer, and it's a huge part of prevention. We



do focus, of course, on crisis, and I think we've heard Tanya, the, the minister, Tanya Plibersek, say this a lot, you know.

00:13:52,606 --> 00:13:52,616 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm.

00:13:52,616 --> 00:13:54,536 [Ged Kearney]

We're spending four billion dollars-

00:13:54,536 --> 00:13:54,736 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm

00:13:54,736 --> 00:14:02,736 [Ged Kearney]

... on family, domestic, and sexual violence, more than any other government, and a great deal of that is focused on crisis, which is absolutely important, and-

00:14:02,736 --> 00:14:02,836 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm

00:14:02,836 --> 00:14:05,116 [Ged Kearney]

... I wouldn't suggest we take any of that away.

00:14:05,116 --> 00:14:05,126 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah.

00:14:05,126 --> 00:14:20,166 [Ged Kearney]

But as you and I have discussed, and I know that this is important to you, is that we really need a strong focus on prevention now, and it has to involve changing culture, changing societal norms, dare I say it, tackling the patriarchy- [laughs]

00:14:20,166 --> 00:14:20,676 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm

00:14:20,676 --> 00:14:45,776 [Ged Kearney]

... and really growing young men who are robust enough in their own bodies, their own feelings, their own personalities to remain respectful and confident in the company of women and understanding those relationships and understanding consent, understanding equality. And it's such a huge undertaking to change that because-

00:14:45,776 --> 00:14:45,786 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm

00:14:45,786 --> 00:14:50,356 [Ged Kearney]

... the patriarchy has been, as you know, has been all-powerful for centuries that-

00:14:50,356 --> 00:14:50,656 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm

00:14:50,656 --> 00:14:58,076 [Ged Kearney]

... sometimes I think, "Oh, no, are we ever going to do it?" But sometimes I think, "You know what? Yeah." [laughs]

00:14:58,076 --> 00:14:58,276 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah.



00:14:58,276 --> 00:15:04,646 [Ged Kearney]

I think we are. And I was talking to a lovely young woman today. Her name is Claudia Young, and-

00:15:04,646 --> 00:15:04,776 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm

00:15:04,776 --> 00:15:40,096 [Ged Kearney]

... she wrote an amazing article for The Conversation recently, and she said, "Yes, you know, you've gotta remember, Ged, that the majority of young men and men generally, you know, they do believe in equality, and they, they do want to be better men, and they do wanna have good, healthy relationships." We've just gotta keep that trajectory. We've gotta stop the trajectory before it becomes overwhelming. So I think we can do it, and I think there are some wonderful programs out there that are working on that right now, and I know you're very familiar with them, like the work that The Man Cave is doing, the-

00:15:40,096 --> 00:15:40,106 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm.

00:15:40,106 --> 00:16:00,256 [Ged Kearney]

.. Jesuit Social Services are doing, um, the Common Ground project. We're investing, you know, a lot of money in growing, um, supporting adolescent boys at risk of using violence. We really, we are doing some great work, and I think this is an area where we have to do some very serious evaluation. We have to understand what is working-

00:16:00,256 --> 00:16:00,266 [Micaela Cronin]

Yes

00:16:00,266 --> 00:16:09,276 [Ged Kearney]

... and what is not working, and making sure that we are directing resources to those things that work. And, um, I believe we can do it. I really do.

00:16:09,276 --> 00:16:52,996 [Micaela Cronin]

That's very encouraging, and I think, as we've talked about before, very important to hear. I think it's important to hear from our, from our leaders in our communities that the belief that this is possible. It's the belief that it is possible to change it. We're very good, and we have changed other very significant-- We've addressed other really significant-- Like, this is a public health issue. This is an, an epidemic that we are experiencing, and if we put our minds to it, it's quite possible to address. I, I agree with you. I firmly kind of believe that. It's just-- And, and look, that's, I think, also the opportunity of this, the, what we know is coming in terms of the second action plan, the second half of this second-

00:16:52,996 --> 00:16:53,006 [Ged Kearney]

Yes

00:16:53,006 --> 00:17:09,156 [Micaela Cronin]

... national plan that we have. We've learnt a lot, and I think this refocusing on men and boys, and what we know too about children and young people in a different way, we'll-- we are learning a lot, and we are getting sharper about what we need to be focusing on.

00:17:09,156 --> 00:17:35,836 [Ged Kearney]

Yep. Agreed. Agreed. Um, because it, you know, it hasn't really had the attention it deserves, although there's a great deal of people out there doing really amazing work. I think in terms of that evaluation and, and as you say, sharpening the response, that's really where we have to focus now. And, and I'm excited. I think that there's some really terrific things that can be done. And, you know, particularly I've, I've, I've seen some amazing programs in the First Nations space, for example.

00:17:35,836 --> 00:17:36,256 [Micaela Cronin]



Mm. Mm.

00:17:36,256 --> 00:18:07,676 [Ged Kearney]

Dardi Munwurro is an organization that's in my electorate, and oh, my goodness, it is, um-- They do amazing work with young m- young boys and men. And so now I'm, I'm, I'm feeling quite positive about that and a growing understanding amongst young women about what is acceptable and what isn't, and the whole program around consent and respectful relationships, and I think that that's the other side of this coin, is growing confident, robust young women who know poor behavior when they see it.

00:18:07,676 --> 00:18:08,076 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah.

00:18:08,076 --> 00:18:10,036 [Ged Kearney]

Uh, I think that's part of it as well.

00:18:10,036 --> 00:18:22,216 [Micaela Cronin]

I think it's-- that's right. It's an incredibly important part of it. And I just wanna then talk about another area of responsibility in your portfolio, 'cause you've just mentioned about consent, about addressing sexual violence. Um-

00:18:22,216 --> 00:18:22,636 [Ged Kearney]

Mm.

00:18:22,636 --> 00:18:44,092 [Micaela Cronin]

Because while I absolutely agree with you about and, and have a whole, um-That the work that is being done and the sense of hope, and I agree, I think a lot of our, um, First Nations Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander-led work is where a lot of the answers are. They're much better often at doing any, you know-

00:18:44,092 --> 00:18:44,432 [Ged Kearney]

Mm.

00:18:44,432 --> 00:18:46,872 [Micaela Cronin]

-the whole of person, whole of community-

00:18:46,872 --> 00:18:47,182 [Ged Kearney]

Mm-hmm.

00:18:47,182 --> 00:18:51,672 [Micaela Cronin]

-integrating families in, in ways that we've siloed in, in-

00:18:51,672 --> 00:18:52,102 [Ged Kearney]

Mm-hmm.

00:18:52,102 --> 00:19:02,012 [Micaela Cronin]

-quote unquote, "mainstream programs" ways that means that they're not as effective. Um, but the area that we're not doing as well, uh, in GED is sexual violence. Um-

00:19:02,012 --> 00:19:02,882 [Ged Kearney]

Right.

00:19:02,882 --> 00:19:22,882 [Micaela Cronin]

And April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month, and we know that rates of sexual violence have continued to increase in almost all states and territories, despite, as you've said, significant reform efforts in some jurisdictions. We know that the Australian government tasked the Australian Law Reform Commission with looking at justice responses to sexual violence.



00:19:22,882 --> 00:19:23,352 [Ged Kearney]

Yep. Mm-hmm.

00:19:23,352 --> 00:19:36,132 [Micaela Cronin]

And one of the things that was very clear about that as well is that it's not just a-- what we heard a lot about was that it's more than just a justice response, um, because of the incredibly low rates of reporting. So-

00:19:36,132 --> 00:19:36,922 [Ged Kearney]

Mm.

00:19:36,922 --> 00:19:52,492 [Micaela Cronin]

-that's another, I know, area of, of passion and focus of yours. So what are you-- what have you been thinking about and again learning and, and focusing on in this role in terms of what we need to be doing in terms of addressing sexual violence in Australia?

00:19:52,492 --> 00:19:57,362 [Ged Kearney]

Yeah, I think we start... You know, there is of course an overlap with family domestic violence.

00:19:57,362 --> 00:19:57,392 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm.

00:19:57,392 --> 00:20:05,272 [Ged Kearney]

Of course there is. But there is also a large part of that Venn diagram, if you like, that is quite separate when it comes to sexual violence.

00:20:05,272 --> 00:20:05,812 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm.

00:20:05,812 --> 00:20:20,352 [Ged Kearney]

It is, can be, of course, from an intimate partner. It isn't always, but, and it varies dramatically from, you know, a dreadful sexual assault situation right through to the stories we've heard of being molested by driving instructors and-

00:20:20,352 --> 00:20:20,672 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah.

00:20:20,672 --> 00:20:29,632 [Ged Kearney]

-um, and sexual harassment at work. And I don't think there's a young-- I don't think there's a woman alive that doesn't have a story of, of-

00:20:29,632 --> 00:20:29,642 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah.

00:20:29,642 --> 00:20:42,801 [Ged Kearney]

-some sort of, um, sexual as-assault or insult. So it, it is all pervasive in my view. And, and I think the drivers are quite d- you know, some of the drivers are different. I mean, we really don't know. There's some great work being done by La Trobe University at the moment-

00:20:42,801 --> 00:20:42,801 [Micaela Cronin]

Yes.

00:20:42,801 --> 00:21:05,652 [Ged Kearney]

-looking at the drivers of, of sexual assault. And you're right about reporting. Reporting is low. We've, we've got some best guesstimates really about how many young women, around, you know, fourteen percent of



Australians have experienced sexual violence since the age of eight to fifteen. That's around two point eight million Australians. But as you said, it's pro-- there's probably a lot more.

00:21:05,652 --> 00:21:06,192 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm.

00:21:06,192 --> 00:21:11,972 [Ged Kearney]

And one of the reasons that, of that is that it's not reported. There has been an increase in reporting, which is a good thing.

00:21:11,972 --> 00:21:12,042 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm.

00:21:12,042 --> 00:21:31,472 [Ged Kearney]

And you know, we want women to report sexual violence, and part of that is, um, women are simply not believed. They're told you are asking for it. You know, there's a whole lot of societal mores around sexual assault. I know I, it... You know, I worked in hospitality as a young woman and just got told, "Oh, well, it's just par for the course-

00:21:31,472 --> 00:21:31,482 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm. Mm.

00:21:31,482 --> 00:21:33,212 [Ged Kearney]

-if someone shoves their hand up your skirt-

00:21:33,212 --> 00:21:33,242 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm.

00:21:33,242 --> 00:21:37,662 [Ged Kearney]

-and gives you a good grope, you know. That's, well, that's just the, the industry you work in, love.

00:21:37,662 --> 00:21:37,692 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah.

00:21:37,692 --> 00:22:26,472 [Ged Kearney]

You know, gotta put up with it, right through to the justice system being one of the major barriers because we know, I think it's, I think the statistic is one in ten reports will actually even make it to court, let alone find someone guilty. The, the process is horrendous for a woman to go through the justice system, and I really congratulate the Attorney General and, and you. I know you did a lot of work on that report, Michela, and the coming through with that. And I think if we can break down some barriers in the justice system and make it easier for women, then we will see a good uptick, hopefully, in reporting and justice being served. But we're thinking a lot of the policy drivers around this are very similar. We're talking about consent. You know, teaching young women about consent. Uh, we've got Chanel Contos doing her wonderful Teach Us Consent-

00:22:26,472 --> 00:22:27,032 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm.

00:22:27,032 --> 00:22:55,152 [Ged Kearney]

-campaign. We've got the Consent Can't Wait campaign. We've got, as I said, La Trobe University looking at different programs around prevention of sexual assault. Uh, I am very interested in sporting clubs, uh, you know, really trying to get to grassroots communities where we can, where I think it is pervasive and really doing some hard work with young men. There's a program at the moment working with coaches, teaching coaches-



00:22:55,152 --> 00:22:55,302 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm.

00:22:55,302 --> 00:23:33,012 [Ged Kearney]

-to talk to their young charges about respect. There's a lot of work happening, as you would know, around the higher education code, around sexual assault on campus, uh, implementing Respect at Work report. There's lots of things that are happening in the world of work around this, the online harm stuff that is happening in the communications portfolio with Minister Wells. The eSafety Commissioner's doing a lot of work. You know, there's, there's a lot happening, but I'd really... One of the things that I'm very keen on, and I know I've spoken about this because you, you've, you're very big on this, Michela, is trying to coordinate all of that cross-portfolio-

00:23:33,012 --> 00:23:33,032 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm.

00:23:33,032 --> 00:23:33,702 [Ged Kearney]

-work-

00:23:33,702 --> 00:23:33,712 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm.

00:23:33,712 --> 00:23:54,352 [Ged Kearney]

-and make it a really well-coordinated effort across all of government, like all of government. Um, I think it is so pervasive and such an issue that it calls for that, and that's something that I'm working on with Minister Plibersek's office to try to coordinate that work to make sure that we get some real change for women in this country.

00:23:54,352 --> 00:24:20,872 [Micaela Cronin]

I think that was such an important signal fairly early on when you took up this, uh, portfolio around bringing together all of the ministers in a round table to listen to sector and advocates about sexual violence and what needs to happen. Your commitment that you've demonstrated time and time again and, and what you've just talked about then about bringing together, this, these problems cannot be solved by any one portfolio, one minister alone.

00:24:20,872 --> 00:24:20,912 [Ged Kearney]

That's right.

00:24:20,912 --> 00:24:48,700 [Micaela Cronin]

We need everybody joining up and at every level. As you've said, people who influence in their local, people who've got influence and responsibilities in the way they relate to young men, boys-Women in their, in their communities, in their families, all the way through to all of the various portfolio holders coming together to think about the intersecting bits of work because there is so much. One of the things I've learnt in this role, there is so much going on-

00:24:48,700 --> 00:24:48,850 [Ged Kearney]

So much

00:24:48,850 --> 00:24:51,190 [Micaela Cronin]

... across government that doesn't-

00:24:51,190 --> 00:24:51,190 [Ged Kearney]

Yep

00:24:51,190 --> 00:24:54,320 [Micaela Cronin]

... necessarily intersect or align and that-



00:24:54,320 --> 00:24:54,330 [Ged Kearney]

Mm-hmm

00:24:54,330 --> 00:24:56,230 [Micaela Cronin]

... or have visibility. And that's-

00:24:56,230 --> 00:24:56,620 [Ged Kearney]

That's right

00:24:56,620 --> 00:25:05,839 [Micaela Cronin]

... that's part of what you've been doing in bringing some of that together, so I really wanna acknowledge and, and thank you, and look forward to doing some more of that work with you, Minister.

00:25:05,840 --> 00:25:12,440 [Ged Kearney]

Thank you. Thank you. Yes. And, and it is, it is a big coordination job 'cause we have the states and territories doing great work as well-

00:25:12,440 --> 00:25:12,700 [Micaela Cronin]

Yep, yep

00:25:12,700 --> 00:25:35,820 [Ged Kearney]

... uh, in this space. There's the, the impact of alcohol and drugs, and, you know, there's a lot that really needs to be tackled with respect to all of this. So I think you're, as the commissioner, it really is fantastic having you there, Michela, and trying to keep us all in line [laughs] and all heading in the right direction. I re- we really do appreciate your efforts, and, uh, we couldn't do it without you, that's for sure.

00:25:35,820 --> 00:25:49,980 [Micaela Cronin]

Thank you. Thank you. I think one of the things that I really realised when I started this role is that we're all just building on each other's work, and we all do the bit that we can from the role that we're in, and none of us could do this without each other. Um-

00:25:49,980 --> 00:25:52,060 [Ged Kearney]

No. And there's great people out there.

00:25:52,060 --> 00:25:52,250 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah.

00:25:52,250 --> 00:25:55,520 [Ged Kearney]

Fabulous people. We all know who they are, and I hope you're listening. [laughs]

00:25:55,520 --> 00:25:56,479 [Micaela Cronin]

Yes, yes.

00:25:56,480 --> 00:25:56,490 [Ged Kearney]

If you're out there.

00:25:56,490 --> 00:26:06,270 [Micaela Cronin]

Let's hope so. I, so I've been ending this podcast, and I'm gonna ke- keep ending it with one question, which is really about the point that you've made a few times about hope.

00:26:06,270 --> 00:26:06,360 [Ged Kearney]

Mm-hmm.

00:26:06,360 --> 00:26:09,560 [Micaela Cronin]



And hope and belief that we can change this.

00:26:09,560 --> 00:26:09,610 [Ged Kearney]

Mm-hmm.

00:26:09,610 --> 00:26:48,400 [Micaela Cronin]

So this current national plan commits to ending violence against women and children, domestic, family, and sexual violence in one generation. So I've taken a bit of artistic license, and given that a generation is about 30 years, and we're looking at 2050. So if we, if we think about if we've been successful in, within this national plan in laying the foundation so that we have pretty much solved the issue of domestic, family, and sexual violence by 2050, what's the one thing that you think we need? Now, it's a completely unreasonable question 'cause there's more than one thing.

00:26:48,400 --> 00:26:48,780 [Ged Kearney]

[laughs]

00:26:48,780 --> 00:26:58,900 [Micaela Cronin]

But what is, and I've been trying, everyone laughs when I ask that, what's the one thing that you think we need to do today that would help set us on the path to ending violence in a generation?

00:26:58,900 --> 00:27:01,040 [Ged Kearney]

I think we need to start young. [laughs]

00:27:01,040 --> 00:27:01,940 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm, mm.

00:27:01,940 --> 00:27:08,790 [Ged Kearney]

We need to start with young, young boys and young fathers, like first-time fathers.

00:27:08,790 --> 00:27:08,800 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah.

00:27:08,800 --> 00:27:12,040 [Ged Kearney]

That's probably, that's two things. Ah, sorry. [laughs]

00:27:12,040 --> 00:27:13,050 [Micaela Cronin]

No, that's okay.

00:27:13,050 --> 00:27:13,099 [Ged Kearney]

But, um-

00:27:13,100 --> 00:27:15,090 [Micaela Cronin]

I think that's a very reasonable answer, yep.

00:27:15,090 --> 00:27:15,560 [Ged Kearney]

[laughs]

00:27:15,560 --> 00:27:15,700 [Micaela Cronin]

Keep going.

00:27:15,700 --> 00:27:16,900 [Ged Kearney]

Yeah, starting young.

00:27:16,900 --> 00:27:16,920 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah.



00:27:16,920 --> 00:27:18,180 [Ged Kearney]

That's what I would do. Mm.

00:27:18,180 --> 00:27:18,750 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

00:27:18,750 --> 00:27:18,760 [Ged Kearney]

Yeah.

00:27:18,760 --> 00:27:36,960 [Micaela Cronin]

Well, I'm in furious agreement with you. I've, somebody asked me a question a bit like that the other day, and I said, "If I could pick one thing, it would be that." Let's refocus the way that, let's really sharpen up our focus on children, young people, boys, all of those points of intervention that we have. Um-

00:27:36,960 --> 00:27:37,400 [Ged Kearney]

Yep

00:27:37,400 --> 00:27:42,090 [Micaela Cronin]

... let's start earlier than we are, and let's take that very seriously. So thank you-

00:27:42,090 --> 00:27:42,090 [Ged Kearney]

Mm-hmm

00:27:42,090 --> 00:27:44,820 [Micaela Cronin]

... so much for your time today, and I look forward-

00:27:44,820 --> 00:27:44,830 [Ged Kearney]

No problem

00:27:44,830 --> 00:27:49,980 [Micaela Cronin]

... to an ongoing conversation with you about this, Jed, and supporting you in the work that you do.

00:27:49,980 --> 00:27:51,440 [Ged Kearney]

Thanks, Michela. Thanks a lot.

00:27:55,600 --> 00:28:42,600 [Female Voiceover]

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00:29:07,450 --> 00:29:18,620 [Female Voiceover]

[outro music]

[End transcript]