

Title: A Transitioning Transgender Who's Changes are Transforming Corporations

Meet Melissa Griffiths, I generally call her "Mel". She is leading the way as an Australian Ambassador as a Transgender Authority and Advocate and is passionate about LGBTQI (Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer & Intersex) issues. Although her roots stem from NZ, she's been living in Melbourne since 1999.

I first met Mel on LinkedIn over a year ago. I think from memory she was my very first online taken offline connection. She was up from Melbourne conducting an interview, so we managed to tee up a catch up. Ok I'll be honest with you, when I first connected with Melissa I didn't realise at first she was transgender, so it came a little by surprise when I spoke with her on the phone and met her in person. I do have gay friends and have met some lovely transsexual individuals over the years, obviously not so main stream but nonetheless I'm not that sheltered. But just coming from even my perspective being a White, working class background, Corporate, Catholic, Female within Pharmaceutical/Scientific Industry you don't come past many Transgender Individuals.

Regardless, it was lovely to meet her and get her backstory, particularly with Bullying. This is the commonality that we both shared, was our stories on Bullying as a result of our appearance that wasn't typically mainstream "normal". Plus sharing how our experiences had kicked us in the guts but how we've also risen like a Phoenix, with Resilience and Determination to keep fighting on.

Melissa was born a Male and is originally from New Zealand a "Kiwi". In 2015 Melissa transitioned from a part time female to full time as a female across all aspects of her life. She noticed during the transition phase that she received a lot of different reactions and many not too pleasant ones at that. These negative reactions and comments came from her associates, friends and family. At a time that was traumatic enough for Melissa to step up and step out into her Authentic Self, people that knew her, and were closest to her didn't support her decision.

During this time Melissa had gone through many difficult roads to get to where she is today, she has suffered from panic attacks through to thoughts of suicide. During this period of rapid change, it made her realise that a lot of what she received came from the perceptions and beliefs of those that ridiculed her. For so long she thought that it was all about her, but it was more about them and their fear and ignorance about Transgender Individuals. So is human nature, we have our unconscious bias and tend to have the "birds of a feather flock together" attitude.

Being of Catholic background it got me to thinking about Jesus and how he tended to flock around the Marginalised in Society – ie. Prostitutes, Tax Collectors, soldiers, criminals, sick people(lepers), old people and children. And yet he made time to really get to know these kinds of people, when society in those days would banish, isolate or condemn them. Jesus was the "King of Kings"! He wasn't a self-proclaimed Leader, he was bestowed the title of "Leadership" among people that

through his actions he made a difference. What kind of society have we become to treat people who are not like us in such a way, have we learnt nothing from the past?

So Melissa began on her quest, which was two-fold: Her dream was to create a Foundation for Educating Employers on Gender Identity and to also assist those individuals going through their Transgender Transition.

I asked Melissa, What's your greatest achievement to date?

It was the introduction of Gender Policy within the Victorian Racing Club and Brisbane Racing Club. All the staff were trained about gender identity and transgender people.

She's also been a finalist of the year for LGBTI, Global Goodwill Ambassador, spearheading Flexible Working Day and being part of the steering committee for Tracey Spicers "NOW Australia" movement. In the short time I've know Melissa she's managed to achieve all of this. Without a doubt an incredible woman!

I asked Melissa What do you love most about Leadership? Melissa's response was "Creating Change" and to "Serve and help others". Some endearing qualities of a Limited-Edition Leader.

So on the other side of the coin What is your Pet Peeves about Leadership? She responded with "Leaders that lack responsibility and accountability. Saying one thing and doing another." Common derailing behaviours I often see in Leadership. But then again, it always comes down to the "Intention behind the behaviour".

I asked Melissa what kind of Legacy would you like to leave? She said, I want to be known for speaking and making the world a better place through inspiring and impacting lives. Creating a Vision of hope during these uncertain times.

Melissa is trying to "Normalise" Transgender Individuals through Education and Policy Changes. She has raised a lot of awareness around how to make the workplace more inclusive for transgender people. She feels that if people are educated and understand the thoughts, feelings and decisions that Transgender people go through to complete their transformation it will reduce unconscious bias in the workplace and beyond. Melissa has positioned herself within mainstream Media in order to spread her message

It's a new area for me and there is still so much for me to learn and understand about the impact of LGBTQI Individuals on their quality of lives. Like I've said in previous articles/blogs, I don't care about job titles, gender, race, ethnicity, religion etc, to me its all about the Qualities and Values of the individual that counts. This is the essence of what being a Limited-Edition Leader is all about.

On a personal note, Melissa is just out to make a difference, to inspire and support others going through their own Gender Transition. After getting to know Melissa a

little more, I've now come to realise why we connected on LinkedIn! *She is a true Limited-Edition Leader with Clarity, Confidence and Certainty of her Vision and Mission to change the Australian Mindset.* If you're curious to learn more about Melissa and how she's assisting Employers and Transgender Individuals or would like to contribute to her dream of starting a Foundation, you can find her on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/melissa-griffiths-ab0327121/> or checkout her website: <http://www.melissagriffiths.com.au>