

## Transcript for the podcast **Coming Home**

### **Bonus Episode: Meet the Makers**

[Music]

**Kiara:** You get judged on an everyday basis off your decisions and choices, being a mum and wife. But it was nice to be able to tell a story without judgement. That was good. It was a nice feeling.

**Mary:** There was no question of me putting my hand up, both hands and feet, up in the air. Someone was asking me to tell the truth of what I went through with my kids, and it was like, "Yes!"

**Neen:** But I never thought that I would not do it. My thing now is, I was silenced for so long. I have a voice now and I'm not going to be silenced anymore.

**Kate:** G'day and welcome to this bonus episode of 'Coming Home'.

After a year of being involved in this project, we all came together on a zoom call in October, 2021. There were the three women from the podcast, Kiara, Mary and Neen, who had never met before and there was Pai Rittachai from Juno, who you, dear listeners, have never met.

Pai was involved right from the beginning of the project. She recruited the participants and supported them throughout, and she worked with me intensively to shape the episodes. She was the absolutely essential second pair of ears at every stage and she brought great care, consideration and wisdom to the collaboration.

She also interviewed Beth, the family violence worker from Juno, and she steered me in the commentary to ensure that it was reflective of the values and experiences of Juno. And, finally, there was me, Kate Lawrence, who's been the writer, editor and producer of the podcast.

So, here's our debrief.

**Several voices:** Good afternoon. Hello. How are you? Very good, so good to see you, so good everyone could make it. So good to see all of you as well. Hi. Hello. Hi.

**Kate:** All right. Let's get started, shall we? I'd just like to just, just get us to take a breath, and I want to acknowledge country: that we are all gathered on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, and I want to pay respects to elders past and present and emerging and to

acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded. And just, yeah, just to remember our own connection to the earth and yeah, how earth, I suppose, how earth, earth relates to homelessness and home. Yeah. And, and I'm so excited.

**Mary:** Oh same.

**Kate:** There were so many women who Pai asked in Juno's clients, but why did you decide to put your hand up and get involved in this project?

**Kiara:** It's my way of being able to give back to the community and help in any way I can, and hoping that this can actually bring a bit more awareness to other women and gives other women a bit more courage and strength to get, get through it, I guess.

**Neen:** I guess I'll go next. Yeah, pretty much the same reasons. You know, putting the story, your story out there, hoping, you know, that you can help other people. I always say that if my story helps one other person, it's a good thing.

**Mary:** I was at a very angry stage in my life when I was asked to do the podcast. I was angry with what I had gone through, with regards to homelessness, and it was still raw. So, there was no question of me putting my hand up, both hands and feet, up in the air.

Someone was asking me to tell the truth of what I went through, with my kids, and it was like, "Yes!" Of course, I'm going to get the word out that this is something that people go through, and I'm still putting my hand up for the same reason, not so much because of the anger. More because it needs to be said.

[Music]

**Kate:** Pai?

**Pai:** For me, participating and working alongside everyone in this project- it is also about the organisation's values and principles, as well. It is for us that we think it's important to hear the voices of the people who live the life of being homeless and experiencing family violence.

We, as an organisation and as a community, need to draw on and learn from that. Nothing is more powerful than hearing the voices from the people who live it.

**Kate:** And for me, I have a really strong passion for stories and particularly women's stories that aren't, they're just not heard.

[Music]

So, I suppose, just going back to when it started, and there was the on-boarding process with Pai, but then the interviews. So what, what do you remember about, I suppose, any part of that, that first stage?

**Neen:** Oh, I guess I felt pretty, pretty good about it, but I was also a bit overwhelmed, you know. Sort of talking about your story can be quite overwhelming at times. And you do, you have your good days where you can talk about it and other days where, for some reason, it's not so good and it's hard.

But I never thought that I would not do it. My thing now is, I was silenced for so long. I have a voice now, and I'm not going to be silenced anymore. It gave me a chance to not be silent anymore, even though it could be quite challenging at times. But, um, I knew I was in good hands too, and I knew that I was safe, which was, is a big thing as well. I thought the interviews were handled really well by both Pai and yourself, Kate. You were quite, you know, really good at making me feel at ease, I guess.

[Music]

Coz it is, it's a big thing and it's quite challenging at times. These are things that we still, or I still have to deal with on a day-to-day basis, but I was really good with it. It was a positive experience.

**Kiara:** Um, I guess I'll go next. I, after accepting the offer, I did question myself as whether I could go ahead and actually continue or finish the interview, in my mind. I was quite surprised actually, I got through the interview better than I expected. It was helpful feeling that, you know, that you were in a safe place. I felt comfortable with your presence, Kate, and also Pai is very approachable. I guess I wouldn't have actually gone ahead if I didn't feel that. I felt safe in that room and...

Yeah, I was actually, when I left, I was still shaking and my jaw, my jaw, even now it's like, it just couldn't keep still. Ah, it was hard, difficult, just like Neen said, you know, you have your good days and you have your bad days. It was even difficult to actually listen back. And some things I spoke about, and I couldn't even remember that I'd spoken about it. So.. (laughs)

But also for me, it was, it was good, of um, finally being able to tell your story and let it go. Hoping that, uh, it's a letting go process for me too.

Thank you, Kate, for being patient with me and, uh, you know, quite understanding and not being judgemental because that's the thing of, most women I think, is that when they tell a story, they are afraid of the judgements, because throughout the whole process from DHS to, you know, your family, your friends, you, you get judged on an everyday basis off, you know, your decisions and choices, being a mum and wife. But it was nice to be able to tell a story without judgement and ah, that was good. It was a nice feeling.

[Music]

**Mary:** Yeah, I remember the interviews to be raw. You sit there and you talk and talk and talk and talk and tell your story, with no-one actually asking you a question, and no-one's actually saying, "Ok, not so much about that, but talk about this," which was nice, not to have an agenda, to talk about really, just talking about what actually happened to you.

I don't remember half of the things I said as well, after listening back. So I'm like, "Oh yeah damn, I did tell her about that and I did say that." Ah gosh, like, it was.... I think once you start and you've got this option of just talking and telling your story from start to finish, however you want to, in your own words, because it's your experience. It's no-one else's.

So, I get to choose all the words that actually happened to me at the time. It's a new kind of freedom, I guess. So, it was really, really, really awesome to not have judgement, just like the other lady just said, and not feel discriminated and shut down and all this other stuff. Like, it's just a microphone and you're singing, pretty much.

[Music]

**Pai:** We were really conscious about setting up safety for, for participants. We were careful about the questions and the purpose of people coming into the project, that they are actually ready and know what consequences of telling the story gonna look like. And I think that is part of the safety plan, which I still do until, until this minute. And I think Kate is doing the same thing.

A number of applicants actually drop off because the safety concern and not because they ah, disagree to the purpose of this project, but it is because people are at different stage of their journey. And I think we just need to be mindful about that.

**Kate:** For me, safety is paramount. I love listening to people's stories. And from Kiara through to Neen to Mary, it was like, far out, I just lucked out! These women are just awesome storytellers. Like, I've got gold here. For me, listening is a form of love, and when you listen with an open

heart, people have extraordinary stories, all of us, and I love doing it. So, yeah, so that was a real privilege to be able to, to listen.

[Music]

How did it feel when you first listened back to your own recordings and, and then also when, when you heard it all put together with the other women's stories. Like how, what was that experience?

**Mary:** I would like to say that I, when I first listened to my own recording, I had, I jumped out of my own skin. It was three different Marys in the one room, just looking at each other, "Did I really just, oh my God! I'm listening to my own story."

It was surreal. It was crazy. I didn't know what to make of it, really. I thought I can't believe I just did that. Oh my God! I didn't know what to think about. I had a smile on my face, but tears running down my face at the same time. To hear myself tell me my own story was a weird experience, but at the same time, I felt it was necessary and then it was even more surreal, and overwhelming, more so, to hear all of it put together, within like the first episode and the other ladies' stories at the same time, with the information and statistics and everything put together from Kate, as well.

It was like, oh my God, this is actually something. Like, this isn't just me blabbing on about my life or what I've been through last few years or thirty years, it's actually a thing. Like, it's actually a massive story out there about homelessness, with other little keys with regards to women and that, the life they've had, and these two other women as well, and it had me in tears. It really did and it kept going.

Like, the tears didn't stop with the first episode. They were there when I'd get an email from Kate going, you know, the next episode's up. I thought, "Okay, I better get my tissue box ready." And I need to just sit there by myself. I'd throw the kids over to my mum or something. Like I had to listen to it properly and by myself, and yeah, it was honestly such an amazing, amazing first feeling to, to hear myself, and then hear the first episode. I'll never forget it. Next, before I start crying.

[Music]

**Kiara:** Yeah, Mary, I, I felt the same. I was overwhelming. I was, didn't initially know how I felt, because I was excited to listen to it, and I was nervous. I was, as many times I've listened over and over to the same episodes, I, I cried every, through every one. Um, I must admit it, uh, turned out much better than I kind of anticipated.

I think that, yeah, despite how difficult it was, I think we all did a pretty good job. I must admit, there was a few things when I listened back and I thought, I didn't mean to say that. (laughs) But like, “under the moon” instead of “under the sun”. (laughs) Yeah. It was, yeah, overwhelming. Didn't expect it to be this big, to be honest. Yeah. Neen? (laughs)

**Neen:** (laughs) Huge, absolutely huge. Yeah, different feelings kept sort of coming through while listening and you know, and in the days afterwards, as well. It's massive when you hear your own story, whether it's a two year thing or a lifetime thing, it's just, you just think geez, with everything that was happening, and, and, there were so many, so many things on so many levels, and you're dealing with all of that at once, and you just think, “How the hell did I do it?” (laughs) You know?

But there's that core strength that comes from somewhere. I don't know where, but you kind of pull it out, even subconsciously, you just seem to be able to pull it out from somewhere, and I think that was something that sort of came across a bit for me. Hearing the other, the other ladies' stories was massive.

I didn't quite, feel quite as alone, and although our stories were quite different, they were kind of the same. There was that, that experience of people dismissing you and judging you and shutting you down. We all had that experience and so that was pretty, yeah, it was pretty big, I gotta say. And hearing my voice, I thought, “Oh my God, I don't really sound like that, do I?” (laughs)

**Kiara:** I was the same Neen. (laughter)

**Neen:** It was like, ‘Oh my goodness, that’s my voice!’

**Mary:** Yeah, I didn't realise how loud I was until then. I had no idea. I actually thought, “I’m loud, but I'm not that loud,” but then listening to myself, I’m like, “My God, I'm loud!” (laughter) My poor kids.

**Kate:** Pai, how was it for you listening?

**Pai:** Those stories actually kept me awake at night, not in a bad way, but I just feel so excited hearing them, the details of the story, hearing how people actually tackle situation at particular point in time- the strengths and creativity of how they get through at critical point in time. Those things like, blew my mind. Those stories made me want to do more work and want to do it well. What about you, Kate?

**Kate:** Thanks, Pai. Well, my first reactions to all your stories were in the interviews. You know, they were all just so incredibly moving, and the strength that all of you, you know, you're such strong women. There's this through line of absolute strength. They're very emotional stories. It's been absolutely, amazingly powerful.

[Music]

Did any of you bring questions that you want to ask us, or ask each other?

**Mary:** When are we going to have coffee? (laughter and voices)

[Music]

**Kate:** Any times where you had second thoughts?

**Kiara:** Oh, yes. (laughs) Well, I made the decision and I, uh, you know, yeah, deep down, like I felt, oh, is this going to get me into trouble? If, uh, I better not let my parents and my family listen to this. (laughs) Because then, you know, there will be, that's the thing, is that when it's a personal thing, especially, you know, um, I guess families.

We all have our own secrets and personal things that we don't want to share to the whole public and I guess that was my worry. It's like, "Am I going to get this backlash from my family: something else I have to deal with and explain?" (laughs) Hopefully, my parents are not listening. (laughs) So, yeah.

[Music]

**Neen:** My big thing was, I was a bit worried about whether I might trigger other people and that was sort of my thing. I thought, "Geez, I hope I don't trigger people," but having said that, the stories are, you know like, it's not all fairies and unicorns and, you know, like sparkles and all that stuff. The stories are tough. They're hard, and I guess people, you are going to trigger people, whether you, the intention is not to do that, but, but the reality is, it is going to do that for people.

I kind of had to reconcile myself with that. That was a little hard to deal with at first but I was silenced for so long, and I'm not going to be silenced anymore. (laughs) I had to kinda make peace with that, really.

[Music]

**Mary:** After telling my whole story, I just had this thought of, “Oh gosh, I hope I don't come across as weak.” I'd rather die than come off as weak, in every situation and every relationship, in every, just everything. Like I didn't, I thought weakness made you look, you know, like vulnerable and small and insignificant and all the other stuff that come under that word.

But, I thought maybe it's not bad to look vulnerable. And then I just pretty much slapped myself out of that, going, “You know what, even if you do come across as weak, all that judgement can stay with whoever thinks that. (laughs) Good luck to them. I'm not going to care so much about that.

I think the main thing about this for me was, afterwards, after getting all those thoughts out of my head, was, it was about: this happened, these stories need to be told. And I'm so glad and thankful that both Kiara and Neen didn't back out, because there's no-one that could have backed me out of this. It would not happen. I think it's such a, such a big, extraordinary project

[Music]

**Pai:** I don't, I'm not sure whether backing out was an option for me, then (laughs) But, definitely I can relate to what Mary and Neen and Kiara actually spoke about- is that fear and the insecurity of putting the work out there, and what, what is that gonna look like and how people gonna judge or critique the work. And what about the safety of the storytellers? If something jeopardise their safety, that's the worst thing in my career. (laughs) And I still have that, until now.

**Kate:** For me, there was a real, oh, there was such a sense of the weight and the responsibility of holding your stories, of cutting them up, in shaping them in a certain way. That was step number one. That was like, I was holding my breath. Are they gonna like it? Are they going to be okay?

But then, we kind of switched tack and we went talking into them, and commenting on them, and again, holding my breath to see what your responses were. And that is a question I would have loved to have talked, you know. How did it feel to have someone go in and kind of talk about your life like that? That's a big question I have.

You were so generous. At no point did any of you say, “Please change something.” So my goodness, what a gift to, to us to have such, not only brilliant storytellers, but so generous and giving in your receipt of, of what's been given back to you as the product.

[Music]



How overall would you describe your experience of being involved in this project, as a final wrap up?

[Music]

**Neen:** Um, I felt respected, and I felt heard. These are not things that, that I've had throughout my life, very often, at all. That was kind of a new experience for me. I was brought up to believe that I didn't matter, and that children's voices, that old saying of, "You should be seen and not heard," and that type of thing. So it was, um, a new experience.

It taught me that, that I do matter and what I say does matter, and it does, it does resonate with people. That's, that's a different thing to pretty much 50 years of my 59 years of life. And I was just an object and that I didn't matter and yeah. And to have someone say, "Your story is powerful." That was massive. Yeah. So it's, it's huge and I thank you for that. My story was, was well-respected. Yeah.

**Mary:** Having it, not torn apart, so to speak, coz it wasn't really torn apart, our stories. It was added to, if anything, with professional opinions and, and statistics and all those doctors, professors and whoever else spoke about our experiences. Coz I didn't know, more than half of that terminology, you know. I didn't understand that those experiences were normal because of this experience beforehand.

I want to thank all of those people involved as well, because it's not just Pai and Kate, there's all these other people that put their input and their professionalism into this, and made it something more than just three little, little life stories. It's not just a story and that's it. It's more, it's more a documentary, if anything, as well. There's a whole dictionary that goes along with just our storytelling, which was eye-opening and shocking at the same time.

I'm kind of sad that it's over. Not that I could go and repeat all our stories again, but I don't really want it to be 'over over'. So, I'm really looking forward to a very long friendship with Kiara and Neen. I never thought that I'd be part of something like this. So, seeing how big it is and how big it's gotten. And I'm looking forward to the changes that, in effect, this will hopefully bring on, with regards to women, women's rights, women's housing, all of it. So, I'm more than happy to continue with anything that's got to do with women's rights. This has thrown me in a different direction, a powerful direction. So yeah, I'm looking forward to what will come.

[Music]

**Kiara:** I'll probably have to agree with Mary too, with your input, Kate, and also the experts' input, in explaining scenarios and situations, and that made it more interesting, because for a person who's in the situation, we don't realise. We don't see a clear picture, but a third person looking in does, and you do that very tactfully and there's sensitivity in there without, without judgement.

And I thank you, and thank everyone actually in seeing it for what it was and being understanding and pointing out the key factors of that was a cycle, and this is the manipulations and, that women go through. Having to be feeling trapped for so long before they can finally get past that stage.

[Music]

**Pai:** To me, this is a new learning in going through the process of working alongside, collaborate with our women, who actually have the lived experience, and producing something that is for the community. I increasingly appreciate how powerful stories can be in connecting people, reaching out to other human being and creating that empathy.

It is so incredible to hear the journey, and not just the journey that is full of struggles and, and all of that, but also I am hearing and seeing the, the journey of recovery as well from these stories, where I see in the story, people want to get better and protect children, protect themselves, protect the home, protect the community. I think that's where the hopes sit. And thank you for giving that hope by sharing your journey with us.

[Music]

**Kate:** For me, it has been an awesome experience. It has had some very low lows, to do with my capacity and learning and, oh my God, not knowing what I was doing. It has been intense, the amount of work. I can't tell you how much work, but I would do it all again in a heartbeat. I am just incredibly grateful to be able to do this work, to be able to meet you all, work with you, create something that can influence. Even if it just influences a few people, to influence, to change how people think about things.

[Music]

## OUTRO

Thanks for listening to Coming Home, a podcast about the impact of Australia's inequitable gender culture and failed housing system, on three strong yet ordinary women.

If this podcast has raised any issues for you, please call 1800 RESPECT on 1800 737 732 or see [juno.org.au](http://juno.org.au) for a list of support services. This podcast would not have been possible without the willingness of Kiara, Mary and Neen to so generously share their stories. It was time-consuming and not always easy. A deep and heartfelt thanks to each of you.

If you like this podcast, please tell people. Word of mouth is the most common way people learn about podcasts. But liking, reviewing and sharing on social media also helps. Podcasting can be like speaking into the void, so we love hearing from listeners.

This podcast is made by Juno, an intersectional feminist social change organisation run by women for women. Since 2002, Juno has been working with women and non-binary folk in Melbourne's north who are experiencing homelessness or family violence. Juno also advocates to improve systems and structures which contribute to gendered poverty, homelessness and family violence. You can find out more about Juno on their website [www.juno.org.au](http://www.juno.org.au), and follow them on social media.

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This podcast is created with script editing by Juno staff, with special thanks to Pai Rittachai. Theme music 'Wanderlust' is written by Scott Buckley, [scottbuckley.com.au](http://scottbuckley.com.au), and released under a creative commons license.

This podcast is written and produced by me, Kate Lawrence.

[Music]

**ENDS**