

NEWS

ADVERTISEMENT

## ‘Change cannot happen if it isn’t systemic’: bodies lay into bullying and harassment battle

July 7, 2022 10:17  
by [CALUM JASPAN](#)



A new initiative from global marketing consultancy, TrinityP3 has prompted an industry-wide focus on the processes in place to prevent and protect employees from bullying, harassment and assault.

The initiative – which asks agencies looking to enter a pitch run by TrinityP3 to sign a statutory declaration ahead of time in relation to internal processes “regarding workplace bullying, harassment and assault” – has been welcomed by several activist bodies, while prompting a larger discussion on the industry’s role in taking leadership on the matter.

Dianne Hill, CEO of Women’s Health Victoria, which runs the industry initiative ShEqual, told Mumbrella the move and leadership by TrinityP3 is welcomed.



*ShEqual and Women's Health Victoria's Dianne Hill*

“I think TrinityP3 recognises that this is the start of trying to get some kind of industry standard, but they also recognize that some of the things that they’re doing are still not enough. I think it’s really good that they’ve recognised that, but it’s absolutely a start.”

Jasmin Bedir, CEO of Innocean and head of Fck the Cupcakes added it was “a courageous initiative which will no doubt ruffle some feathers in the industry”.

“This will hit really close to home for some agencies, and I have no doubt that some people in the industry (usually those that benefit from the status quo) will try and discredit it as an attention-seeking PR stunt. I applaud this initiative as it not only encourages brands to look deeper than just the shiny surface of agency creds but also puts some real pressure on agency leaders to look inwards and seriously consider their culture and ethics.”

Cindy Collier, founder and CEO of MakeLoveNotPorn told Mumbrella she

Cindy Gallop, founder, and CEO of MAKELOVENOTWAR told Mumbrella she hugely applauds the move and the statement made by TrinityP3.

"Especially as it helps with the only thing that, sadly, is at all likely to make the male industry leaders change their behavior and their agencies' culture – client pressure and disapproval."

"The men of the Australian ad industry have refused to change their ways in the face of public assertions of belief in gender equality, diversity, and inclusion in our industry, while private behavior demonstrates the complete opposite; in the face of the trauma and suffering induced in the women (and men) of our industry by bullying, abuse, sexual harassment and rape; in the face of the fact that our industry continues to hemorrhage vast amounts of female talent, creativity and skills that could be serving our clients so much better and delivering far greater work."



*Cindy Gallop: It is likely to make behaviours change*

Hill continued: "They're taking concrete action. This is not just a statement on their website. They are actually taking concrete action, and I think that is really fantastic but we do need to see the whole industry come together if we want to change the culture of silence that is pervasive in agencies and workplaces, and that contributes to violence against women."

The initiative TrinityP3 has put in place has challenged the industry bodies to put forward their efforts in this regard, as founder and CEO, Darren Woolley called them out in a LinkedIn post on Sunday, which subsequently received coverage across several trade titles.

Mumbrella understands the initial discussion between Woolley and the industry bodies, including the MFA, ACA, and IMAA took place in March, with conversations about how the bodies could take leadership on the issue. After the considerations were rejected in May, Woolley and his P3 team opted for its own approach, then giving notice to the bodies that this course of action would be taken late last week in a letter.

Following the ongoing discussions this week, the ACA put forward a strong statement on Wednesday afternoon, ahead of the launch of its Create Space program, set to launch next week.



*The ACA launched Create Space last year*

Key outtakes from the statement included:

*"We recognise that over the past few years there has been considerable media coverage on the significant impact that sexual harassment, bullying and assault have on individuals, their friends, families and communities.*

*While this behaviour can occur in any industry and many of our members have strong frameworks and processes in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their staff, ACA recognises the need to not only lead by example, but support the industry to do better every day."*

*On July 14, ACA will release the [Create Space Report & Action Plan](#) that will reveal the findings of the census as well as three immediate actions the industry can take to address key issues of inequality, exclusion and underrepresentation, including creating safer workplaces. More actions will be rolled out in coming months.*

*Critically, the only thing that will prevent sexual harassment and bullying is an industry culture that simply does not tolerate it. To accelerate this shift in standards and behaviour, we need long-term, multifaceted strategies grounded in data and which engage agency leadership, middle management, clients and the broader advertising ecosystem.*

*It is also important to understand that Create Space will not sit by itself. The actions will form an integral role in ACA's accreditation program that will set minimum standards across the industry.*



Following the statement from the ACA, TrinityP3 and Woolley said they "welcome any initiative aimed at reducing the incidence of workplace bullying, harassment and assault and most importantly creating a safer industry for us all."

"This was the suggested solution we presented to the ACA and other industry bodies back in March this year – where we proposed extending existing third party frameworks (which many agencies already have) and simply suggested they be extended to all their members. It was not a mandate, as some have suggested, and we have remained open to other proposals although to date none has been forthcoming beyond these ACA diversity initiatives, which frankly while important risk conflating two separate issues."

Woolley continued: "We believe great education and information is also an important part of the solution and we wait with interest to see the full details of this proposal from the ACA on July 14."

"But in the meantime, we continue to be concerned that the focus of the ACA Create Space while addressing the need for increased diversity, within the industry, does little to ensure diverse new entrants into agency workplaces can be guaranteed a safe environment. We are at risk of perpetuating a cycle which could only exacerbate our industry's ongoing challenges with diversity if we drive new entrants into agencies while ignore ongoing culture challenges only to see them churn."

Woolley sought to clarify that the initial proposal to the industry bodies in March was to highlight the need for "an independent reporting process to allow transparency into the on-going issues of bullying, harassment and assault in the industry and allow this to be monitored to ensure the safety of all employees," with the TrinityP3 stat dec solution specifically coming separately later, following the rejection of this suggestion by the industry bodies.

"While this is not the perfect solution, we are open to a better alternative that allows advertisers to have a level of confidence when appointing agencies that they are not tacitly supporting this reprehensible behaviour. If a better solution to meet this requirement is proposed, TrinityP3 would be fully supportive."

This week, in response to a number of questions regarding the MFA's leadership in this area, it also provided a list to Mumbrella of its current initiatives in relation to workplace safety:

- The MFA's DE&I program, launched in March 2022, includes a focus on ensuring employees feel included, supported and safe in workplaces, setting out targets for the industry, and provides access to a comprehensive training program with a commitment by the board for staff to complete 'Core Inclusion' training in the first 12 months.
  - Our annual Mediaai survey, completed by over 50% of all MFA member agency employees, includes questions on whether they feel included, safe and supported at work. 96.87% agreed that they feel safe and I'm supported to be myself at work. I belong 94%, 79% have not experienced prejudice, exclusion, insensitivity or ignorance in the last 12 months.
- Further actions the MFA told Mumbrella it is taking include:
- The MFA created a working group earlier in the year comprised of MFA

Board members to examine the state of workplace safety within MFA member agencies and to develop appropriate industry action to protect all workers.

- The working group has conducted an assessment of existing programs among members, and found most members have extensive support services and Employee Assistance Programs (EPAs) already in place including anonymous whistleblower and support services. (A future action may be to generate greater awareness of these programs among the broader industry, including clients.)
- The working group has agreed that the role of the industry is to set minimum industry standards and accountability, provide guidance and training on appropriate workplace behaviour, and to promote support services across the entire membership.
- As a next step, the group is currently seeking to appoint an independent expert to oversee the process and to explore the feasibility of an industry support service.

Hill said it is "a little disappointing" that it is taking both the regulatory environments so long to get a hold of the issue.

"We have worked with them through ShEqual on a number of guidelines and we welcome the opportunity to continue to work with them," Hill continued. "We welcome the opportunity to continue to provide them with the evidence base of what is actually needed to address gender equality, which is one of the key drivers of sexual violence, and one of the key drivers of violence against women, and one of the key drivers of sexual harassment and violence in the workplace."



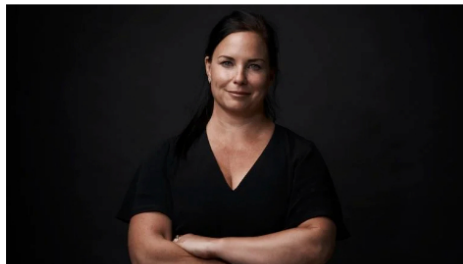
*TrinityP3's new initiative has prompted a wider discussion on the industry's approach to bullying, harassment and assaults this week.*

"We know that what we really need is a structural change in the industry. So that is about cultural change, that's of all of the things that need to be in place within industries in relation to pay transparency, in relation to flexible work, in relation to bystander training, in relation to transparency about sexual assault, and in relation to making sure that people are not having these gag orders as they're called or confidentiality agreements. It's really important that we actually get rid of all of those things."

Hill added that what ShEqual would like to see from the industry bodies "is them actually really engaging with the whole, and really putting out there and driving the change".

"I think there's a large portion of their membership that is very interested in also creating change."

We really need to see this leadership that's being put forward by TrinityP3 and others, and we need the industry bodies to take that up to all of their members and go, 'we want to be leaders, we want our industry to be a leader and to be a beacon for gender equality'."



*Bedir: Change cannot happen if it isn't systemic.*

Bedir said: "Change cannot happen if it isn't systemic. What is often labelled as an isolated incident is a result of an endemic undercurrent of terrible culture in agencies. The Ad Council's "Create Space" initiative is a great starting point and will hopefully create some meaningful conversation in the industry."

Bedir added that in the wider industry, agencies often conflate representation with experience. "Just because you hire women or minorities in your business, it doesn't mean that these people are enjoying themselves in their roles. This sentiment has so far not been widely accepted in the industry, and it's, in my opinion, the single most important task we have: Fix the experience women have in the industry."

As for the TrinityP3 specific pitches, Bedir said with statutory declarations needing to be signed by individuals, not agencies, whoever signs them will need to be willing to carry the risk.

"If you're certain as an agency leader that you have created a safe and inclusive culture, the risk is low. Those that do not sign it, will have some

soul searching to do."

GOT A TIP?

**Calum Jaspan**

Calum Jaspan is News Editor at Mumbrella, based in Melbourne. He is also the producer and host of the Mumbrellacast.

 [LinkedIn](#)

**topics** [ACA](#) [CINDY GALLOP](#) [DARREN WOOLLEY](#) [DIANNE HILL](#) [FCK THE CUPCAKES](#) [JASMIN BEDIR](#) [MFA](#) [SHEQUAL](#) [TRINITY P3](#) [TRINITYP3](#)

 [Share](#)

 [Tweet](#)

 [Share](#)

**Comments:** **2**

[ADD COMMENT](#)

**ClientsAreTheWorst** 7 Jul 22

All well and good – but what about clients?



[Reply](#)

*User ID not verified.*

**PJ** 7 Jul 22

This is a great initiative. Repeat offenders will no longer be able to switch agencies with immunity. There's been some wilful blindness from recruiters here too which irks me and others I know.



[Reply](#)

*User ID not verified.*

**Have your say**



[Continue with LinkedIn](#)

OR

**Comment anonymously**

*Your comment will be marked as unverified*

Name

Comment

[SUBMIT COMMENT](#)

LATEST



**Sefiani**  
part of the *Clarity* Global Group



**SPEED**

'Get almost anything': Uber Eats and Special launch new brand platform after 5 years

AO launch night faults for Nine; Seven wins entertainment

Sefiani Communications Group acquired by Clarity

Getting product placement past a cynical audience

Speed picks up media duties for Clear Skincare