

[Transcript] Mamamia Out Loud / The Sex Lives Of Australian High School Kids

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Mamma Mia Out Loud!

Hello and welcome to Mamma Mia Out Loud.

It's what women are talking about on Wednesday, the 19th of April.

I'm Holly Wainwright.

I'm Mia Friedman.

And I'm Jesse Stevens.

And on the show today, new rules might mean that before you can get a cosmetic procedure, maybe even Botox, you need a psych referral from your GP.

Is this a good thing?

Plus, don't ask, don't tell school.

And the church that says sexually active students can't be school captains.

And the bad book review that spiralled into an all-out war, but first, Mia.

The King and Queen consort have personally chosen a recipe for coronation quiche in celebration of the upcoming Coronation Big Lunch.

But this is no ordinary savoury egg tart.

Totally meat-free.

This quiche is filled with the delicate flavours of spinach, broad beans and fresh tarragon.

In case you missed it, the official dish of the Coronation has been announced.

And in his first impression of Mari Antoinette, King Charles has declared,

let them eat quiche.

The palace has released the official recipe for Coronation Quiche on its website, stating that the dish had been personally chosen by Charles and Camilla and that it was easily adapted to different tastes and preferences.

Unfortunately, though, the key ingredient of the quiche, eggs, are in short supply in the UK, which is currently battling through an egg shortage.

Holly, what is going on in your homeland?

Before it was beer, now it's eggs.

Like Britain is a mess.

It's like Eastern Europe before the war came down.

It is. Britain is a mess in many ways.

And obviously the egg shortage is one of them.

But what I thought about when I saw this, well, A, I didn't know there was an official Coronation dish, even though I've grown up with something called Coronation Chicken, which is like a chicken sort of stew in like a creamy curry sauce.

Sounds disgusting.

It is disgusting.

So I've never actually voluntarily eaten it.

Is that from Queen Elizabeth?

Also, here's the thing.

My entire life, I've known what Coronation Chicken is and avoided it.

And today, did I realize that that was the official dish of Queen Elizabeth's Coronation?

But the thing about that dish is that it does sound like a signature dish.

Can quiche ever be a signature dish?

That's what I want to ask, because I don't know if it is.

Do people really get excited if I said, come to my house?

It's a real throwback, quiche.

I mean, out loud as who are Gen X or older,

we'll remember in the 70s or early 80s,

there was a book called Real Men Eat Quiche.

Or Real Men Don't Eat Quiche.

I can't remember which one.

But it was sort of a satirical book,

because quiche was considered a fairly feminine thing.

A bit of girly food.

I don't mind it.

I just don't get excited.

The thing that I thought immediately when I saw the criticism about the egg shortage,

also there's a bit of criticism that it's not vegan,

because there's some lard in the recipe that Charles has put.

So there's people who can make Coronation Quiche have egg privilege.

Yes, exactly.

But I thought, imagine the focus groups and the meetings

that would have gone into deciding what the Coronation dish is.

I think of the least offensive recipe you could think of,

because it couldn't be anything that looked like cultural appropriation.

So it couldn't do a curry.

It couldn't pick a particular pizza, pasta, fried rice.

Have you not stolen enough?

That would be full of problems.

It probably couldn't be meat heavy,

because Charles is known for being environmental,

and that would be a problem.

It has to be affordable.

A room of gray men.

A potato pie.

Yes.

I reckon that's where they've ended up with the quiche, right?

Is that a room full of gray men are going,

what could we possibly put out there
that no one would complain about,
and they've misfired.
What about, like, just a baked potato?
Yes.
A baked potato?
You can't go wrong.
They've got plenty of those, right?
Pounding to the Irish.
With some baked beans.
That's the most English dish of all time.
Maybe it would be triggering to Irish people,
because there was a potato famine.
And then, of course, the Brexit people are upset,
because quiche isn't seen as English.
It's a French word.
It's officially a French dish.
So, we don't like the French in England.
Allegedly.
And so, you can't please all of the people all of the time.
From July 1, people seeking cosmetic surgery,
such as facelifts, nose jobs, breast work, tummy tuck,
may be first referred to a psychiatrist.
You might have seen these headlines,
but what we're going to do is actually look at
what it all means and what the process is,
because it's changed pretty significantly.
The Medical Board of Australia announced this week
that anyone seeking cosmetic surgery
will first need a GP referral, right?
So, you can't go in and kind of go,
I'd like my tummy tuck.
They'll say, go speak to your GP,
and then come back to us.
And those wanting cosmetic injectables,
such as Botox, could face,
and this is still a question mark,
a similar screening test, which means that
you might need to speak to the person doing it,
and there would be like a psychological screening test.
Or, if there are any red flags,
they might send you to a psychologist
or a psychiatrist for evaluation.
So, in the case of, say, breast implants or liposuction,

we're talking surgery, you would first need that GP referral.
Then, when you arrive at the surgeon,
the surgeon does psychological assessment,
depending on the results, they may be deemed unsuitable.
But a surgeon isn't a psychologist.
No, but I suppose it's the same like...
They could ask you a list of questions.
Yeah, same with obstetricians, for example,
have like a psychological screening test that they do.
And then, if there are any red flags,
they send you to the experts.
How many of these statements do you agree with?
Yeah, that kind of thing.
Now, why have these changes even been made?
It's because of Australia's increasing uptake
of cosmetic procedures.
So, something like Botox is costing Australians
a billion dollars a year.
What do you mean?
It's like we're spending a billion dollars a year on Botox.
Yeah, the medical board commissioned an independent review,
and they looked at how media reports revealed
serious patient safety concerns,
including hygiene breaches, poor patient care,
people are unsatisfied with their outcomes,
and the advertising can be aggressive and inappropriate.
And from what I understood,
reading some of those incredible investigative reports,
there are some really reputable, experienced,
qualified people who are performing plastic surgery
and cosmetic procedures, and then there are cowboys
who are able to just kind of do an hour-long online course
and then do boob jobs.
Yeah, and maybe the existing regulations were kind of serviceable
when you're talking about a small number of people
and a small number of operators,
but now that it's ballooned, as Jesse said,
to being so mainstream, a million dollars a year on Botox alone,
the regulations have to shift.
But what I don't understand is that they're trying to regulate
the patients rather than regulating the practitioners.
They're doing both.
I looked closely at this because a lot of people were like,
well, how about a higher standard for practitioners?

Yeah.

They did that.

So additional changes include a higher standard for practitioners, stronger restrictions on advertising, and a new model of accreditation.

So you can't just get a certificate after a day.

You actually have to be properly trained.

And I thought this was interesting.

There is also going to be a cooling off period between the patient giving informed consent and the procedure taking place.

So what we've heard of, for example, is I might go in for my boob job and they might say, have you considered a tummy tuck as well?

I then give consent,

but in fact, I haven't really thought about it deeply.

The upsell.

Yes, the upsell.

Exactly right.

And so this would mean that I'd have to go and think about it, maybe do a bit more research and then see if it's something I still want to do.

There are lots of criticisms about this.

Mia, what's your instinct about whether it's a good idea?

Is there a world in which GPs are now just full of people wanting to get Botox and just need a piece of paper sign?

I find this really fascinating

because there's no question that getting cosmetic surgery would become as commonplace almost as dying your hair or for some people getting manicure or pedicure.

Certainly things like injectables, fillers, Botox.

They're so, so, so mainstream.

And there's a distinction.

So cosmetic surgery is something like breast implants, no surgery.

Things are cut into your skin.

So you need like a general anesthetic for them.

Yes, cosmetic procedures.

The question mark still is,

although it looks like they could be coming for your Botox, is injectables, fillers, Botox, as you said, but also, and this is where things get blurry, laser skin treatments, dermabrasion, fat freezing.

Mole removal.

Yeah, all that stuff.

Needling, which I've had.

Exactly.

What I think is interesting about the psychological assessment, I mean, at the very extreme end, there are people who have body dysmorphia and who look in the mirror and see something that might not be objectively true and that want procedure after procedure after procedure in the hope that they will attain some level of perfection or that their life will change in some way.

But for 99% of, let's just say women who have these procedures.

It's more than 90% of women.

Like something like Botox.

They're saying this will disproportionately affect women because it is women getting Botox.

So I don't know how you distinguish between the person who is doing it for the right reason

and the person who is doing it for the wrong reason

because the right reason or the main reason,

essentially, why we all do these kinds of things

or consider them is because we live in a patriarchal system

that equates women's value with looking young and beautiful and that's the world we live in.

And I don't know how a psychologist can change that

and I don't know how...

Sign off, just like situation normal in this person's life.

Yeah, exactly.

Like say to the psychologist,

so can you blame the patriarch is there a column for that?

Also, there's such a level of subjectivity in this

because I listened to a news report about it

where they interviewed a cosmetic surgeon

who said all day, every day, these days,

she said, my patients are getting younger and younger

and younger and they're coming in with pictures

on their phones of themselves with a filter.

There's a new TikTok filter called Bold Glamour

and it makes you look very glamorous,

like a celebrity version of yourself.

And 20s younger.

But these girls are already 20, right?

And they're coming in with that and saying,

make me look like this.

And she's saying, Darl.
Darl.
That's why she starts.
I said pet, I said Darl.
She's often saying, I can't make you look like that
or if I could, it would be a very, very, very big deal.
That's not like five mill of filler.
She said that celebrities involvement in this
have also made it seem like it's really simple.
They come in with a picture of Kylie Jenner
and they said, I heard that she went from this to this
with just five mill of lip filler
and they're like, again, Darl.
Like that's not how it works.
If you're constantly being asked for procedures
that will make you rich if you make them
because these are expensive
by an increasing number of people who want them,
who have every right to get them,
but should they have them?
Should you be considering the position
of somebody's mental health
if they are, as I heard this woman also say,
coming in with a picture of a Bratz doll
and saying, I want my face to look like that.
Like some people would say, you might not be well, babe,
if you think that your face is so awful that you need...
Yeah, but when it's sending your kids to an expensive school
as if you're going to say no.
Well, indeed, right?
And also, who's to say that you can't do whatever you want
to your face?
Because of course you can.
Of course, if you want to undergo procedures
to make you look like your bold glamour filter
or like your Bratz doll
and you've got the money and the agency to do it,
who's to say no?
But a lot of people would suggest
that there is a mental health issue there.
But it's insane.
About wanting to look like something that doesn't exist.
So why are we outsourcing the problem of social media
and Instagram and filters

and the way that the advertising industry
and the fashion industry portrays women
and the entertainment industry as well?
Why are we then outsourcing that to the individuals
and saying, you have to somehow prove,
like I feel like it's gaslighting
to say we swim in this sea of images and messages
that we've got to look a certain way.
And then when we go and try to act on that,
we somehow have to prove.
I don't know.
I can't even find the words.
I aren't psychiatrist and psychologist officers
full of young men and young women
who are bursting with the anxiety of living in the world.
We're living here.
But so is a psychologist the one who says,
no, I think you're really beautiful, sweetheart.
Your nose is lovely.
Maybe the psychologist is the person to say,
is your anxiety about your face
and you thinking that your world and your environment
will be a better place if you change it.
Is that maybe a misplaced idea?
But it isn't because the person with the enormous nose
who's been teased, they live in a world
where everyone's got a perfect nose.
Every nose that they see is perfect,
whether it's filtered or real.
But the question of whether that nose will make you happier,
it's not simple.
And I think everyone knows the experience
of having a stage in their life where they were sure
that they were going to do something,
whether it's to their lips or their nose or their teeth
or they fantasized about it.
And then time passed and you stopped fantasizing about it.
Also, and I know this is a slightly controversial place
to take it to, but you very often will read opinion pieces
from people who say,
I thought that losing 40 kilos
was going to fix all my problems.
They get there and they go,
you know what, I'm still me with all my problems.

But it's not to say that wasn't ever a good thing to do,
but there is a psychological component
to all of our dissatisfaction
about all of the things we're thinking.
And it's not necessarily a bad thing for there to be
a little bit more of a gate saying,
but it's a society that does that to us.
Yes, but still we have to learn how to pick it.
What if I sit down, they send me to a psychologist
and I say, I want to get this, this and this.
And they say, all right, let's unpack that.
And I say, well, I'm with a partner who tells me
that I've got an awful nose and that I look old
and that I'd look better if I looked like Kylie Jenner.
Like, isn't that a point where people can go,
oh, all right, we've got something else to deal with here.
Yeah, but who pays for that session?
Yes, and this is a really good point.
I think this is where it gets complicated
because psychologists are already full
and psychiatrists are already full.
And there are people with really acute pressing
mental health conditions that can't get in.
And to then have that as a box ticking exercise
for people who are actually okay is not ideal.
And it also feels, I can't believe I'm going to say nanny state.
I sound like I'm on Sky News.
And this all sounds like an extreme analogy,
but are we then going to have psychologists in Westfield
that are going to stop people buying a really,
really expensive pair of shoes?
Are you sure?
But it's going to make me happy.
Are you sure it's going to make you happy?
How much is personal responsibility?
But I don't think it's a bad thing to have a few more obstacles
to getting exactly what you want at all times.
And now I sound like Jesse because I sound like a Catholic
who doesn't believe in pleasure all the more.
But if you're listening to the people in the industry
who are saying, my waiting rooms are full of beautiful young women.
And I know that sounds very judgmental,
but it's like there is nothing wrong with these people.
So it's a society and Instagram tells them that there is.

And I'm not saying that there is anything wrong with the way that anybody looks. But what I'm saying is if we're seeing an exponential explosion in the number of young women who are choosing to spend large amounts of money that they probably don't have on these kind of procedures, is it necessarily a bad thing to just have like a couple more gates that you might have to open before you get there? But isn't it that thing of we're picking people out of the river? We're not going upstream to find out how they're falling into. And no one's even talking about that. This is my point and we talked about it on the show last week when you weren't here about filters and how they're talking about finding influences for using filters. And I'm like, what about just don't let the platforms have filters? I 100% agree you've got to deal with upriver, but I don't think there's necessarily a bad thing about dealing downriver. It's just in a realistic world, as you say. It takes two weeks for me to get an appointment at the GP where I live. That boob job is urgent. It is. Practically though, I think the outcome could be that a lot of Aussies end up doing it overseas. Yeah. If there's too many safeguards and too many kind of hoops to jump through, you'll go and do it in Thailand where it's cheaper, where it's quicker and you'll get an outcome that isn't great. And that's already happening. Yeah. And in Europe it happens. I read this amazing British piece recently about all the people who go to Romania to get teeth and nose jobs and planes are just full of these people. Because there's less regulation. It's cheaper, it's good, it's quick. And you just go and hold over two weeks and come back with a new face. Hi, this is a message from Mamma Mia out loud. I have just finished listening to the mullet conversation. I'm a high school teacher and I'm with Holly. I could not give two shits what their hair looks like,

what piercings they have, what makeup they are wearing.

Holly, you are wrong.

I work in an all girls school
and we've only in the last few years
started letting them wear earrings
and I can tell you, no.

I agree with all of you.

It is an expression of your hair
and how you dress, an expression of who you are.

We shouldn't squash down in kids.

I believe they should be allowed to wear the hair
in the way that they want,
but behaviour is actually extremely declining.

I don't blame the mullet,
but who knows, maybe it has something to do with it.

Thanks ladies, bye.

Question.

Can you be high school captain if you are having sex?

Answer.

Well, that depends.

Which high school we're talking about.

One of the fanciest schools in the country
has had to send a letter home this week to parents
to assure them that they are not
quizzing their kids about their sex lives.

Since the church that oversees the school,
which in this instance is the Presbyterian church,
has ruled that said students who have sex outside of marriage
shouldn't be school captains
or in positions of school leadership.

Now, the example that was given in this case
was a couple in the same sex relationship,
because the reason this is all being talked about
is there is currently an inquiry going on
with the Australian Law Reform Commission
about whether or not amendments can be made
to the religious discrimination bill.

And the Presbyterian church put in their submission
that they believed that, for example,
students in the same sex relationship
would not be able to model the Christian ethos
required in the role of student leadership.

This submission said,
if the student were in an active same sex relationship,

they would not be able to give appropriate Christian leadership in a Christian school, which requires modeling Christian living. This would also be the case for a student in a sexually active unmarried heterosexual relationship. Now, after that submission became public, the school were just talking about, Scott's College had to send home, well, didn't have to, chose to send home a letter to all parents, reassuring them that they were not quizzing the kids about their sex lives. At no stage in the process of applying to become a student leader is information sought or questions asked about the student's sexual activity. The college does not ask applicants if they're in the same sex relationship. The college does ask all prospective staff if they can support the Christian ethos of the college. So basically what they're saying is, for students, don't ask, don't tell. For teachers, we'll ask and it's up to you if you tell. This is all bubbling up as part of this reform and it's going to be really interesting to see where it lands. Jesse, should students who are having sex be allowed? Jokes, jokes, jokes, jokes. Jesse is, don't ask, don't tell, enough. This is a band-aid solution and something's about to boil over. This is not a workable long-term solution for Catholic schools and Christian schools and they've been grappling with it for a long time and it is getting increasingly awkward. Don't ask, don't tell, you mean? Yes, so for example, if you didn't have school leaders, who were in same-sex relationships, you'd have no school leaders, right? It's the same, a lot of people say, What do you mean? What I'm trying to say. It's part of the reform. Yes, exactly right. They're bloody great leaders.

They are.

Same with like the drama department.

This is what everyone says.

Jesse Stevens, your stereotypes are not helpful here.

Stereotypes, but like schools could not functionally run.

No.

Without people who are in same-sex relationships.

But no part of the community could run.

No.

Like there's no part of the community,
whether it's truck drivers or people who work in banks
or garbage collectors,
where there is only a certain type of person.

So there's no part of society that could function.

And this is the thing that Catholic schools

and this is the microcosm that I sort of know.

So many people, you go,

Yeah, he lives with his male partner
and she's been divorced three times or whatever
and they don't ask you during the job interview
and you wouldn't volunteer it.

But that doesn't mean that the discrimination doesn't exist.

It absolutely exists because you're suppressing
a real part of your life and that is being internalised
by a 17-year-old boy or girl who is leading a school.

And also don't ask, don't tell,
doesn't work in the age of social media.

Yeah.

Where every student will be posting,
not every student,
but a lot of students will be posting about their relationships
and what they get up to and as they should
and that's what kids do.

So don't ask, don't tell, just doesn't work.

It doesn't work.

And there's a real difference between the school community
like capital T, capital S, capital C,
that the principal imagines exists
and that maybe the nuns or the brothers
or the actual church imagines exist
and the letters that they send home
and the conversations they're having
with the actual school community
that is functioning day-to-day.

If you think that the teachers don't bloody know
that half their class is gay
and that they're gay and that so-and-so is at Mardi Gras
on the weekend.
Well, I hope they'd know if they were gay.
Yeah.
Like, that all exists,
but there is such an ignorant...
I honestly think that there are people
who are running these school communities
that are so out of touch.
Well, there was a very interesting opinion piece
in the Fairfax newspapers this week
by the school captain of Melbourne Grammar.
His name's Daniel Cash.
He's a fine-looking young man.
And he basically wrote...
From what I understand, Melbourne Grammar is Anglican,
but not Presbyterian.
And he was basically saying,
I'm gay, I'm the school captain,
and if this was a Presbyterian school,
I would be fired.
I couldn't hold this position.
Yeah, they're trying to fire me as school captain.
Now, of course, there are school captains
all over the country who are gay.
What's different now, though,
is that once upon a time,
that was something that you would
never talk about at school,
never admit at school.
And the same with the teachers.
You know, the teachers would have to keep that hidden as well.
Now, happily,
there is such a widespread acceptance,
understanding, support, celebration,
normality, wallpaper background noise
of people's sexuality.
We've learned that it doesn't impact
on your ability to do your job or be a person.
That the idea of people hiding it
is seen as an infringement of their human rights,
which essentially it is.

And the cohort don't care,
and that's a generalization.
I'm not suggesting that discrimination doesn't still exist.
But my worry about the discrimination
is that in a bunch of schools,
the school captain is chosen by the principal,
by members of staff.
Is he usually voted by the peers?
Usually.
But my worry...
They have to kind of be endorsed, though.
They have to be endorsed.
They have to be the popular kid who's bribing everybody.
So if you've got a principal
who is still like,
well, they're not living Christian values
because it is my understanding that they are gay,
then that's serious discrimination.
And whether that's happening implicitly or explicitly,
it's still happening.
Why would you send your child
to a religious school
if you did not agree with the tenets of that religion?
I'll tell you why,
because you would feel that your child
is getting a better education at that school
than some of your other options.
I'm not saying whether it's right or not,
but I'm saying that a lot of people...
No, I understand.
Of course, that's why.
Of course.
But a lot of people will grit their teeth
through the religious part
in exchange for the education.
I don't agree that that's why people are wearing it.
But doesn't that just tell us that there's something...
Back to the river and the top of the river
and the bottom of the river
and all the stuff we were just talking about.
Doesn't that just tell you there's something wrong
with the education system?
Because one of my issues with this
is that you can't edit religions

to be more palatable to you
so that you get your lifestyle choice, right?
You can't.
Either the religion has to grapple with these issues,
these big issues.
In 2023,
is the Presbyterian Church and the Catholic Church
still standing around,
standing very, very firmly
on the fact that they believe
that homosexuality is a sin,
that those people are going to hell,
that sex outside of marriage is a sin?
If that's really what they hold
and those are absolutely the tenets
of their Christian beliefs,
then, of course,
they can't just throw that out the window
as an individual whole.
People should have more integrity.
I can pick and choose.
That's not fair.
I can pick and choose.
The religion should have more integrity by point is.
You know what I mean?
Either have your position and stick to it,
but you can't edit out the bits
that aren't popular in this moment
and the reason you can't is because it's dangerous.
We've seen it happen in reverse many times, right?
If you go,
well, we shouldn't legislate this.
We believe that this religious organization,
yes, sure, these are the rules that are written down
in our fundamental tenets,
but these days we're quite nice and groovy,
so we're just going to waive those.
If we accept that,
then we also accept the other way,
the handmade tail way,
which is that when the wind changes
and another kind of view is either fashionable
or comes into power,
we can also go back to those tenets and say,

you know what,
we've decided this school and this organization
and this community needs to go back to basics
and live by the absolute rules of the Bible
that are set out here,
and so all you out.
You out.
I think that's a straw man
but this is what this law is about, right?
Do you let them discriminate or not?
No, you don't.
That's the point
and so if you're not going to let them discriminate,
then you have to deal with the fact
that what's written down are the rules.
And this is the thing,
if you have a school community of a thousand people
who are all pretty much in agreement
and functioning one way,
and then you have a principal
or maybe an office or...
An administration.
An administration made up of 12 people
who think a different way.
Men.
Inevitably.
I think that people feel as though
that actual school community
are the tides of change
and if you read Daniel's incredible piece
in the Sydney Morning Herald,
he is a Christian
and he's looking at the Bible
and going,
as a gay man,
this does reflect my values.
So he's not compromising or thinking,
I'm bending it.
There are a lot of people who are...
He's saying Jesus wouldn't discriminate, basically.
But what happens when the administration
in that school changes
and the guy comes in,
always a guy,

comes in and goes,
we need to adhere to our strict Christian values
and that Daniel isn't welcome
to be in school captain anymore
because he does breach these things.
Like, if you allow loopholes,
that is what will happen.
Yes.
My point is,
you can't be grumpy with religious schools
for being religious.
You can't say,
it's fine because they say
they believe all that stuff,
but in practice,
they're very accepting.
You either change the rules
in the first place.
I disagree.
I think most people who would consider themselves
part of a formal religion,
for example,
I consider myself Jewish,
but my synagogue doesn't ask
whether I eat bacon, for example,
and has no problem with me eating bacon.
That's not a rule of being Jewish.
I mean, it is strictly,
but you know what I mean?
So I think that's the relationship
most people have with their religion.
So you can be of deep faith,
like Daniel is,
but you don't have to accept
every tenet of it.
But if I've signed my kid up
to that school,
and the headmaster at the time
is quite progressive,
but then that changes,
and I have a problem with it,
they can send me back to the about page,
which I've looked at many times,
the principles of this school,

about page.

We believe in these tenets of the Bible.

They can go back to the rules.

So what are we arguing?

So I think that what Holly is saying
is that we've got to stop being surprised.

Yes.

Right?

It's ridiculous that we say,
well, the reason we send our kids
to these religious schools,
even though we don't believe
in the religious tenets that they have,
is because they are better
than the state schools.

The problem you've got there
is the better than the state schools bit.

Right?

Like that is the problem.

I can't tell you,
and I know we don't want to get into this again,
but how many people I know
who send their kids to schools,
whose religion they fundamentally don't agree with
because they believe their kids
get a better education there,
and they're absolutely allowed to do that.
But then they're really shocked
when the religion card is played.
And it's like, that's what the school is.
Don't send them there
if you're going to be surprised that they're religious.

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The subject of her post,
an author called Lucy Bloom,
did not react very well to that.

She kind of lost the plot
and went after Camilla over many weeks,

and I watched it just totally aghast
that someone would behave like this.
It seemed like it was over,
and then it escalated this week
when Lucy penned an opinion piece
for Women's Agenda,
a website which is meant to be
about empowering women
and backing women.
But unfortunately,
they've run this hit piece,
unchecked and unverified,
about Camilla,
and it's really affected her.
And understandably, she's upset
and really just feels like this is never going to end.
I vowed long ago to stop running from bullies
and to call them out when I see them,
which is why I'm making this video.
I'm so angry and I'm so upset
for this poor young woman
who did nothing wrong
but write what she thought about a book.
It's not often that a controversy
rips through a community of book lovers,
but right here, right now, this week...
Oh, I don't know.
It's a racy bunch.
You may have heard...
A deeply emotional, reflective, feeling bunch.
You may have heard of Bookstagram.
It is the name of the community of book people
who discuss books on Instagram.
Love Bookstagram.
Cleverly named.
The most powerful people in this community,
you would think, of course, are the authors,
but also the Bookstagrammers.
They are the keen readers who also post reviews.
So they're kind of like book influencers,
and there are loads of them.
They usually have around a few thousand followers.
But in Australia, that might not seem like a lot.
Here, a bestseller means that you've sold around...

Is it 5,000?

Yeah.

About 5,000 copies.

If you sell that many,
you're considered doing very well.

Yeah, a bestseller.

So even though Bookstagrammers may seem really small,
they have quite a lot of power.

Publishers send them free books for this same reason
and caught them a little bit

in the same way that they send free books
to journalists and other people in the media
because the publisher is hoping for a good review
or even a mention.

And they say, you'll notice on Goodreads,
it'll say, I was sent this book, it was free,
but it was in exchange for a fair and balanced review.

Exactly.

So it is like an ethic of a Bookstagrammer
that they must be honest even though it was free.

And Bookstagrammers aren't paid in money.

They do it because they love books
and they want to share their thoughts with their followers
and the wider book-loving community.

So it's like a book club or a hobby, really,
but they do it on Instagram.

If they get big, they could do some Spon Con here and there,
but in general, their content is not paid for.

Bookstagram is usually a lovely and fairly sedate place.

I think we could agree.

Until about six weeks ago,
when a Bookstagrammer called Camilla,
who posts under the account Books Through My Veins,
she has just over 9,000 followers
and she loves reading.

And on her page, there are hundreds of posts
sharing honest reviews of the books she's read.

She has a lot of sort of Australian fiction and...

Yeah.

Yeah, it's a good way to kind of platform
a bunch of different authors.

Exactly.

She recently reviewed a new book
from an author called Lucy Bloom called The Manuscript.

And, well, Camilla did not love it, really.
She didn't hate it.
She didn't love it.
Here's a little bit of what she said.
Lucy Bloom's debut novel, *The Manuscript*,
is an action-packed story full of purposeful coincidences,
romance, sex and humorous commentary from beginning to end.
The first 50 pages are a bit slow in pace,
so it was a bit challenging to understand
where the story was going.
However, once most characters are laid out,
it's quite effortless to follow the narrative.
Every single storyline and there are plenty
is interesting and inventive.
I celebrate Bloom's imaginative skills
and her capacity to interweave each storyline
in such amusing and clever ways.
I've been pretty happy with that.
That's not bad.
On balance, that's pretty good.
Okay.
It goes on.
Unfortunately, I cannot turn off my intuitive,
close-reading habit, and as a reader,
I always get stuck on the details.
It was almost impossible for me to move on
from the issues I had with the characterization
and focus on anything else.
Although I was able to appreciate the doubtless good intentions
behind the fun take on the adventures
of a white 40-something divorcee woman,
I was still not convinced by the superficiality
of the characters.
Now, in particular, Camilla wrote about finding
the protagonist in this book too perfect
and that her unrelatability didn't sit well with her.
Fair call.
And so she finished with,
overall, the manuscript is an entertaining,
fast-paced novel that will be a perfect fit for readers
that, unlike me, do not get stuck on the minutiae.
Unfortunately, I was unable to appreciate it more
given my personal preferences
when it comes to characterization and relatability.

Now, as far as reviews go,
I will call that benign.
Positive review, actually.
Spend if you want to know what a bad review is.
Go on to Goodreads and guess anyone.
Just your favorite book.
Go on to Goodreads and read a few two stars.
People can be brutal.
Now, I don't know if this is a normal thing for authors
to then come on and comment.
This is where things got spicy.
Is this normal?
What is normal is for you to be tagged,
which we'll get to.
OK.
So that you'll be tagged so that you'll know,
so that you'll go and read it, right?
So Lucy Bloom has entered the chat.
Six weeks ago, she posted just a thumbs down
as a comment under the review.
And then she went on to say,
you don't like a book because there's a size eight character,
yet there's all shapes in this book.
A soft and squishy best friend, a dad bod lover.
You don't like this book because the protagonist is perfect.
But this is a book about her idiotic decisions.
Camilla, you say you can't get past details,
but you've missed all the details that you criticize.
So basically she bit back.
Yeah, she clapped back.
Now currently there are 261 replies underneath her comment
and underneath her thumbs down comment.
There were a few hundred more.
And pretty much none of them were happy with her.
She was criticized very strongly by other readers
and booksellers and all different people on Bookstagram.
Who said that there is an unwritten rule
that is you don't engage with reviewers.
You let their review stand and you move on.
I heard it referred to, I don't know if it was by Camilla herself,
that there's an assumption that her feed,
that her world is an author-free space.
The comments, some of them were fairly strong
and things like you should be ashamed of this knee-jerk reaction

you had to this review.
You've lost this community.
Lucy Bloom, you need to move on.
This is an opinion of your book
and everyone is titled to their own opinion.
Yes, they are.
And so Lucy then wrote a piece about the backlash
that she had to her backlash to the review,
basically saying that she'd been canceled
and she'd had death threats and how unfair it was.
It was published by women's agenda.
It was then taken down.
Meanwhile, lots of people including authors
are now picking sides,
calling her a bully
and she's claiming in response that she's doing
what a lot of authors do
and that's engaging with her critics.
This is a wild story.
I'm fascinated by it.
I love it.
I exist very far outside Bookstagram,
although there is one Bookstagram,
Alana Hershivitz who's also a friend of mine
who whenever I want to read something
I just go and read her reviews
and I just download all the samples onto my Kindle.
I think she's got great taste.
Holly and Jesse, you're both authors.
Are you picking a side?
Jesse, you go first.
I read everything there was to read about this
and there was something quite telling
in Lucy's article on women's agenda
where she basically said
it was becoming a one-way conversation from reviewers.
She felt as though the reviewer got their say
so why didn't she get her say?
And I thought, oh no, no,
this is the thing about making art
is that if the reviewer never gets their say
then it's a one-way conversation
where you're just putting your art out into the world
and expecting that other than applause and praise

you're not going to get any blowback.
That's part of the conversation
and I tend to think that when you make any work of art
especially when it's 80, 90,000 words long
you've said your bit
and then you've got to put a full stop
and let it speak for itself.
And in that way I'm very much on the book's to grammar side
because I sort of go, no, that was a really fair review.
It actually was subjective.
I don't think she was misrepresented, fair call.
I have empathy for Lucy though
and that's because you get tagged in bad reviews
and in the old world where your reviews were in newspapers
or even in the depths of the internet
and you go, I don't look at Goodreads.
I know what Bookreads is, what is it though?
Goodreads is a platform, it's like a rotten tomato.
Yeah, like a Yelp, you know, it's like TripAdvisor.
So it's a user-generated book review platform, right?
So it's lots and lots of book lovers talking about books
and for people who are really into books
they love it and for authors they're notoriously brutal.
How would you use it?
I've heard about this great book called The Manuscript.
I'll go on to Goodreads, I'll type in The Manuscript
and I'll read the reviews.
So what I often do is I'll be in a bookshop
and I'll go, oh, that looks interesting
and I might jump on to Goodreads
and it gives me a star ranking.
It tells me whether it's two star or it's five star
or it's whatever.
See, I couldn't care what anyone thinks of a book except me.
I suppose the other thing it does though
is that it tells you how many thousands of reviews it has
so it also gives you a sense of how big this book was.
How scale.
Will it also say like most of these reviews are five star?
Really good, exactly.
And I find that helpful.
But when I went and looked at mine after my book came out
there are some that are just so personal
so exactly like podcast reviews that make you feel awful.

So you go, you know what?
I've got to make a bit of a boundary here
and I'm actually not going to read them.
So it's like don't read the comments.
Don't read the comments, right?
You don't have to read the comments.
When you get tagged and I have had this experience
on Instagram, I've been tagged in a review
and I've gone how lovely someone's read my book.
And then I've clicked on it and it's awful.
And I think valid.
Don't tag me.
You don't need...
You've just ruined my night.
Yes.
Oh my God.
Because I should...
Why would someone do that?
Because they want your attention.
Because they want your attention
and often if it's a good review
I'll often share it and go,
oh my God, look at this completely valid, wonderful review.
Exactly.
Of a wonderful book.
Totally objective.
I felt sorry for her in that way.
And the other thing that is the emotional quiet part
that you're not really meant to say out loud
is that sometimes people review your books
and you think, you just don't like me.
So there are people who I've seen
and I've gone, no, no, no, don't review my book
because I know you hate me on this podcast.
You hate my work.
I annoy you.
And then you see them go, I read Heart Sick
and I'm like, no, no, no.
Because you know what they're going to say.
The thing is about all this really
is handling public criticism because it's funny.
When you're asking whether we take sides,
I was going to say, well,
Camilla gave my book a terrible review.

Which she did.
She actually said,
I usually have a two book by an author rule
and breaking it for Hollywood.
Right, I will never read another one of her books.
I'm like, okay, but I'm joking
because I absolutely endorse Camilla's right to say that.
That must have made you feel shit.
Like any bad review makes you feel shit.
Of course.
But if you can't handle criticism,
you shouldn't be in the game.
You shouldn't be putting out into the world.
The thing about this is I entirely empathize
with Lucy Bloom feeling mad about that.
And the temptation to bite back is very strong.
But you have to somewhere within yourself
find the maturity and the distance
and the wisdom to not do it
because it never ends well.
Because this particular story has been terrible
for both these women, actually.
Just like anything on the internet, right?
So Camilla said some things about Lucy's book
that she doesn't agree with.
She's allowed to say that.
Lucy comes in and says,
hey, you don't know what you're talking about.
And now all of Camilla's fans hate Lucy,
have jumped over there.
That can have real world consequences.
If they all go on to good reads,
and I believe that some of them have,
and give it a one star review or a no star review,
that could actually really affect Lucy's livelihood.
So there's really bad ramifications for Lucy on that.
However, over here for Camilla,
she's also copying a lot because Lucy Bloom's got fans
and they're saying, Camilla, you're being so mean.
And so what you've actually got is a no win situation
where two women are being harassed massively on the internet.
And it's like an old school blogger war, you know?
Yeah, or YouTubers now.
Yeah, YouTubers going at each other.

That actually is good for nobody.
Reviews have always meant a great deal.
So before the internet,
the New York Times can make or break a play on Broadway.
Literally close it with a bad review.
Restaurant reviewers are reviled by restaurateurs
because again, they can close your restaurant down
with a bad review.
So reviews have always had a lot of power.
And in the world we live in now,
where it's not so much this particular book reviewer
who writes for a broad sheet newspaper,
who maybe did a literature degree and has a PhD
and has been writing and reading books for 20 years,
there used to be a sort of assumption
that there has to be a level of expertise.
Now we live in a much more democratic user review world
for everything, don't we?
You know, this hotel, is it good?
We go on, see what people say.
You're not looking at travel writers
who've stayed in a million hotels.
You're looking at your neighbor down the road.
In lots of ways, that's fantastic.
It's democratized everybody's opinions,
books to grammars, as you said, Mia, in your intro,
a really important part of Australian books
because there's also so much snobbery
in that elite reviewing world.
They would never review Lucy...
Well, they might, I don't know.
They would never review Holly Wainwright's books
in the more high-falut newspaper.
So it's fantastic that books to grammars
are probably going to have a more diverse range of tastes
and opinions, and they'll read small books
and big books and all those things.
So that's great.
But what comes with that is more opinions
that you have more access to all the time.
And I remember, I think I talked about this once,
but when I gave my marriage a year, came out
and I was getting tagged,
and I also had an alert on the hashtag,

you get a good review.
Yay, I did this last night, actually.
You share it.
Look at this amazingly good review.
Got tagged in one that was like a carousel on Instagram,
and the first tile is like three words to describe
Holly Wainwright's new book,
and I just reflexively liked that post.
But then if you swipe the carousel,
the words were like,
cliché, boring shit.
And I liked it.
So it's like I'd endorse the review,
and I'm like, damn it, now I can't unlike it.
I look like an idiot.
But were you ever tempted to just go a waves emoji
or something like I see you,
or is that giving them the attention that they're looking for?
I think it wades into this kind of feudy behavior
if you start doing that.
I think you have to accept,
if you're putting work out into the world,
however you do it,
people are going to have opinions about it.
You've got to kind of stand by their opinions to a point.
But it's very difficult.
I entirely understand Lucy Bloom's point.
It is very difficult to not take personally critique
of something that you have worked that long, that hard,
put that much of yourself into.
It's really hard to get to a place
where you could read a bad review and get on with your day.
And I'm not fully there.
Like when I looked at that Camilla's review today,
I'm like, oh, fuck, that's hard.
Especially when you're writing, you're like, oh,
but that's my job, right?
That's my job is to move on and get on with it.
Like, but it's fascinating how much this has blown up.
And now all these authors are taking sides.
And I'm just going to be really annoying and sad.
Don't really have a side.
Can the out loud is because that's what's interesting
is we don't want anyone to jump on and have a go at anyone.

Please don't do that.

What I would love to know is if people think
you get a right of reply to a review,
if you see something where you feel misconstrued
or misunderstood, whether you've made any art,
do you get to go on and correct them
or do you have to let it stand?

And also one of Lucy Bloom's points is this writer
got a free book and she came to my launch
and she got my champagne and a snack
and a free piece of cake or whatever.

This exchange only works if we agree
that that doesn't change the opinion of the book.

But there's a bit of you that's like,
you ate my sandwiches.

I paid for that shit.

Let us know in the out louders.

I am very curious.

I have a quick recommendation before we go
and it is a foundation.

Now, I bought this with my money.

It is the It Cosmetics Your Skin But Better Foundation Plus skincare.

I didn't know that this existed.

So It Cosmetics, we've talked about this a lot of times.

It was the one everyone has.

It's the CC cream.

We were all obsessed with that for a while, weren't we?

Yeah, it's very good.

But it's interesting, it was of its time
because it's quite heavy coverage.

So it's good if you have a special occasion
or you're going to get your photo taken or whatever
because it's quite matte.

But I discovered when I was wandering around

Sephora a couple of weeks ago,

this other one in It Cosmetics

and it's in like a glass bottle

and it comes in 40 different shades.

It's about \$70.

You can get it from Adore Beauty or Sephora.

You probably want to go and at least try your color at Sephora.

But if you order from Adore,

they send you a free Tim Tam, which is always good value.

But what I love about it is that I'm looking for a foundation now

that's not as heavy, that's not as thick.
It feels a bit more serum-y.
Like a tinted moisturizer?
Yeah, but a little bit heavier.
So all the new foundations,
all the foundations now,
the new generation of foundations
have got skincare ingredients in them as well.
So they're not just make-up, they're this hybrid.
At least that's what they say to us so that we buy new ones.
But I'm obsessed with it.
I've been using it every single day.
So if I've got a...
And it is not as expensive as the Westman Atelier one.
No, it's half the price.
So if I've got redness and pigmentation and all that stuff,
is it actually going to cover it?
Well, all these things, they say they're buildable,
which basically means that you...
Put more on.
You can make it as light or as un-light as you like.
That skin looks amazing.
Yes, it does.
Thank you, Out Louders, for listening to us.
We would love you to listen to yesterday's subs episode
if you would like to,
because it's all about a certain honeymoon
that's just happened in the Out Loud world.
Jesse got married to Mia's son.
If you missed that,
that's what happened two weeks ago.
Went on a honeymoon, Mia went to.
We did a whole episode about it.
Subs episode.
A little bit of clarification at the questions.
Jesse had an unpopular and unexpected opinion.
We highly recommend you have a listen.
We'll put a link in the show notes.
Thank you for listening to Mamma Mia Out Loud.
This episode was produced by Amica Laspi
with audio production from Leah Porges
and assistant production from Susanna Makin.
And we'll see you tomorrow.
Bye.

[Transcript] Mamamia Out Loud / The Sex Lives Of Australian High School Kids

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