



Julie Gilbert: Why I had to speak out about Scott Volkens.



JULIE GILBERT

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Swimming coach Scott Volkens coached Julie Gilbert from about 1982 to 1986. Ms Gilbert told the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse that between the ages of 13 and 14 she was sexually assaulted by Volkens on a number of occasions. She gave evidence of the abuse occurring in a massage room and on another occasion in a caravan where Volkens lived. Two other women, Kylie Rogers and Simone Boyce, told similar stories.

Despite being removed from the Swimming Queensland Hall of Fame and being refused accreditation by Swimming Australia, Scott Volkens continues to coach swimming in Brazil.

Julie Gilbert writes exclusively for Mamamia about how she found the strength to tell her story and the faith she has that child sexual abusers will be brought to justice...

My story, like most victims of [child sexual assault](#) is not a pleasant one. It's a story that requires you to disclose in detail the humiliating acts done to you as a child,



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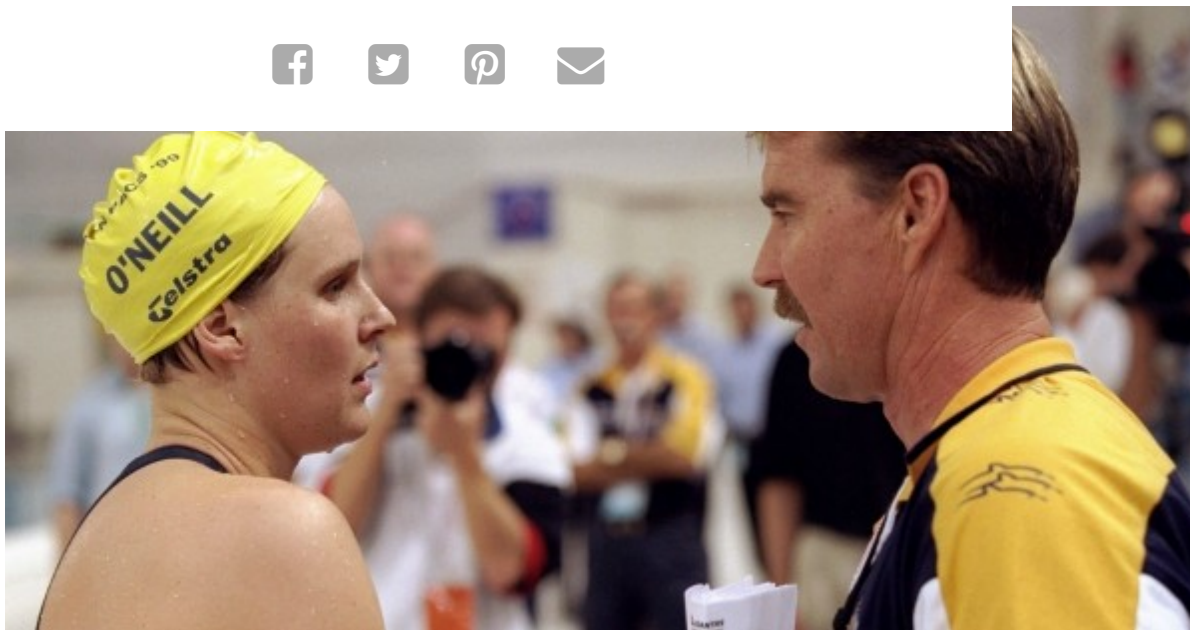
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Scott Volkert with swimmer Susie O'Neill. (Image via Getty/Adam Pretty)

It's also one that has to be told to complete strangers in hope they will believe you and treat your words with the sensitivity they deserve.

It's really hard to do, because every time you describe those acts you relive the memories over and over again. You have to revisit those dark memories you have spent years learning how to suppress, all in the hope that someone will believe you and fight for you.

Many victims may ask why I would want to put myself through that. It is a question I have often asked myself. What have I personally got out of telling my story? For years I took the road of silence thinking that was the easier road to take. Silence, secrecy and shame are the child's worst enemies and the paedophile's best friends.



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Silence, secrecy and shame are the child's worst enemies and the paedophile's best friends.
(Image of Scott Volkens via Getty/Ricardo Bufolin)

So I tied my secret up in a box and left it on a shelf thinking that I was dealing with it. But all it did was create destructive behaviours that impacted on my life for years. Years spent trying to create the perfect world all so I could feel safe. But I wasn't safe, I was just avoiding.

Finally, after suffering years of trauma and an eating disorder, I decided to untie my box and let my secret out. It was not easy to do. And it certainly has been filled with disappointments, frustrations and anger, and the shedding of many tears.

I have realised however that the road filled with road blocks, potholes and rough edges is the one that has allowed me to recover. As the years have passed I have realised that finding my voice and telling my story is much more powerful than suffering all of those years in silence. And when you make your voice a part of your healing process, it is the moment you cease being a victim and you became a survivor.

**Coached into Silence**

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And as a survivor I plan to continue to use my voice for all of those who are yet to find theirs. When they finally do, hopefully the path will be less rocky, because every victim who uses their voice makes the journey a little bit easier for the next.

The report released recently by the Royal Commission gives us our first glimmer of hope in more than a decade that allows us to press the DPP to restate the charges against Volkens.



Volklers with Michael Klim (Image via Getty/Donald Miralle)

Some may say it's just another report, words on a paper but to me those words remind me of how strong we have become. How powerful our voices can be when we come together and tell our story.

So now it is up to the DPP to do their job and use their voice to make sure perpetrators are brought to justice.

The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse has released a report about how the Queensland Academy of Sport, Swimming Australia and the Director of Public Prosecutions in Queensland and New South Wales dealt with the allegations against Scott Volklers. The Commission found that there were "inadequacies" in the way that these bodies dealt with the allegations. It is the hope of Ms Gilbert and other alleged victims of Mr Volklers that the DPP will reinstate the charges, so the charges can be explored fully by a court.

Julie Gilbert is an ambassador for child protection advocate Bravehearts and the Founder and Principal of nutrition and dietician specialists Solutions with Food. Need to talk to someone? Bravehearts is here to help: 1800 272 831 or more info at www.bravehearts.org.au



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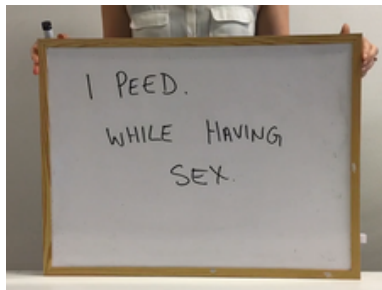
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